



# SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ROLE PRIORITIES

(OKUL MÜDÜRLERİNİN ROL ÖNCELİKLERİ)

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## ABSTRACT

School principals must grasp the dimensions of school management system to enhance instruction and student learning. In this process, it is considered that five management aspects support it. These are leading the school, shaping the school's future, leadership and teachers' professional development, focusing on the individual and finally, managing the school-community relationships. It is matter of question if principals have their own priorities among these roles while carrying out their duties on daily basis. Therefore, this qualitative study purposed to discover school principals' role priorities among the roles mentioned here during their daily administrative practices. Results reveal that principals of this sample carry on "leading the school" role primarily having no or little time, authority or interest in the other management aspects during a one-day-experience. It can be concluded that principals conduct administrative chores like paperwork, answer phones, attend meetings and follow daily routine of the school.

**Keywords:** School administration, principal, principal roles, role priority.

## ÖZ

Okul müdürleri, okulda öğretimi ve öğrenci öğrenmesini geliştirmek için okul yönetim sisteminin boyutlarını kavramak zorundadırlar. Bu sürecin beş yönetim unsuru tarafından desteklendiği değerlendirilmektedir. Bunlar okulu yönetmek, okulun geleceğini şekillendirmek, liderlik ve öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimini sağlamak, bireylere odaklanmak ve okul-çevre ilişkilerini yönetmektir. Nitel olarak yürütülen bu araştırma, okul müdürlerinin günlük yönetsel uygulamalarında belirtilen bu rollerin hangisini öncelikli olarak gerçekleştirdiklerini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada elde edilen sonuçlar, bu örneklem grubunda yer alan müdürlerin evrak işi, telefon görüşmeleri, toplantılar ve görüşmeler gibi günlük rutin işler anlamına gelen "okulu yönetme" rolünü öncelikli olarak gerçekleştirdiklerini göstermektedir. Bu kapsamda müdürlerin, diğer yönetsel rollerine ya çok az zaman ayırabildikleri ya da ayıramadıkları anlaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Okul yönetimi, müdür, müdür rolleri, rol önceliği.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, society gets more complex and as a result of it, the leadership becomes more sophisticated accordingly. In this respect, in order to be effective at their schools, school administrators or principals are expected to cope with a rapidly changing world of work. It is considered that good school principals have great influence on positive outcomes of students by being team-oriented, strong communicators, team players, problem solvers, change-makers and transformational leaders.

Many researches have been made to define schools and leaders' roles in organizations. In their studies, Portin, Alejano, Knapp, & Marzolf (2006), Salazar (2007) and Crow, Hausman & Scribner (2002) state that similarity between schools today and those in the past are limited as they are in different social and academic environments. According to Elmore (2004) since the mid-twentieth century, particularly over the past three decades, the goal of the school has focused on

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education, learning and achievements of all students. Since the environment and goals of the school have changed, the form of educational administration has diversified accordingly. Therefore, it seems essential for school principals to change their management practices in this changing world of uncertain and unstable reality (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

### **School Principals' Roles**

In the past, school administration focused on solely organizing the school, defining the vision of the school, translating the mission and performing administrative duties by applying rules simply (Marsick & Watkins, 1997; Morrison, 2007; Usdan, 2000). In this process, school principals used to be legal leaders in the 1950s and human resources managers in the 1970s. Later in the 1980s, they used to be managers, school development or change experts and finally instructional leaders. According to Portin et al., (2006), Foster (2007) and Degenhardt (2006) they were mainly change experts in the 1990s, and they were supposed to be instructional and accountable leaders in the 2000s. According to Mulford (2003), this is a role transformation and it is believed to stem from paradigmatic change of the Old Public/School Management. In that management approach, administrators mainly used to carry out strict bureaucratic, legal roles and successful schools were described as clean, giant machines and neat units causing fewer problems. However, in the New Public/School Management approach, basic issues are accountability, site-based school management and other chores such as competition, curriculum and evaluation. In this management style, school principals are expected to formulate and implement educational vision, recruit staff and manage human resources and school-community relations, develop learning communities, evaluate teacher performance and increase student achievement.

These days, school principals' roles fall into three categories as planning, organizing and decision making during a one-day-experience (Bulach, Boothe & Pickett, 2006). More specifically, the functions of the principal may also include some issues like organizational development, managing decision-making, systemic planning, designing a safe atmosphere and environment, managing the curriculum, preparing the school schedule, supporting teachers' professional development and financing school activities. Castle & Mitchell (2001) categorized principals' roles as administrative and instructional duties. In this regard, while administrative roles consist of daily routines like paperwork, phone-calls, meetings, developing school-community relations, meeting private needs of individuals, groups and mentoring/counseling, instructional roles are considered as training others, supporting staff, developing a positive learning atmosphere, setting the vision and completing the mission.

According to Bursalioğlu (2000) two basic roles of school principals are educational leadership and staff evaluation. In his study, Balcı (2005a) highlights principals' instructional leadership roles. He emphasizes that as an instructional leader, school principal should visit classes very often. What is more, Taymaz (2000) lists school principals' roles as staff management, student affairs,

instructional facilities, school finance, and educational activities. Besides, Şişman & Turan (2004) consider these roles as program development, program evaluation, performance evaluation and learning. Officially, Ministry of National Education (MEB) defines school principals' roles as (MEB, 2000):

- improving productivity and the quality of the school,
- conducting research projects and sharing their results with senior management,
- taking necessary precautions to make the school a learning organization,
- providing professional development opportunities for the teachers,
- monitoring instruction,
- staff's performance,
- researching the reasons of failure,
- mentoring the teachers.

Furthermore, Murphy, Elliott, Goldring & Porter (2006) claim that as critical figures, they play important roles in improving teaching and enhancing student learning at school. Within this new context, their role is an intense and complex one which includes different types of tasks (ISLLC, 2008; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2007).

While performing their work, school principals are supposed to encompass five main roles now and in the future (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Foster, 2007; Fullan, 2003). In this study, these roles largely fall into five circumscribed areas as leading the school, shaping the school's future, staff leadership and teachers' professional development, focusing on the individual and managing the school-community relationships. In this respect, *leading the school* means administrative chores like paperwork. Here, principals serve as lead learners and teachers. The other role is *shaping the school's future-vision* which means promoting the academic success of all students by setting higher expectations and standards. Here, they are expected to organize the school environment around school achievement by creating and demanding rigorous content and instruction that ensures student progress toward agreed upon academic standards at school. Another role is *staff leadership and teachers' professional development* which means creating a climate of continuous learning for the teachers. It is linked with student learning eventually. Here, they manage the teaching staff who are the ones actually lead the work of education, teaching and learning (McKinsey & Company, 2007). In this context, main assumption is that student learning cannot be improved efficiently over time unless teachers are developed professionally. Therefore, principal's main work is to plan and lead the professional development process in consistent with teachers' needs. The next role of a school principal is *focusing on the individual* that refers to student-centered management style. The principal uses multiple sources of data as a diagnostic tool to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement. In this sense, they are supposed to provide individual attention to each individual in the school community. They are also expected to support, have concern, care and back up every member of the school in academic, social and emotional contexts by creating a safe school atmosphere. Principals should do it by establishing a school

atmosphere that emphasizes respect, concern, caring, and empathy for everybody. They also do it by encouraging all students to express their individuality freely in the classroom and the school. At the same time, they provide scholastic, emotional, and social support for every student in order to enhance self-esteem and shape their identity as well (Ministry of Education, 2010). The final role is *managing the school and community relationships* that. Here they are actively engaged in the community to create shared responsibility for school and its success (Box, 2005). As schools are influenced social and cultural contexts in which they operate, establishing cooperative relations between school and its community becomes vital for realizing the school's vision. In this frame, principals should develop a positive and productive cooperation with other institutions, bodies, and organizations within or around school communities.

It is considered that principals' leadership roles mentioned here are positively related to better student performance and increased job satisfaction of teachers. However, it is a matter of discussion if principals carry out all these roles during their management practices on daily basis or they have their own priorities among them. For this reason, this study aims to find out what their role priorities among the roles mentioned here are in the school system in Turkey.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design. These types of research studies are used to gain in depth knowledge in a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). More specifically, the study employed an ethnographic research design in collecting data. Ethnographic designs, as Creswell (2002) described them, "are qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (p. 481). As such, by using this research design and utilizing in-depth interviews, the study explored "culture-sharing" behaviors, beliefs, and language among principals in Turkey. Principals' views were obtained through interviews with semi-structured questions, as recommended by Bogdan & Biklen (1998), to "get the subjects to freely express their thoughts around particular topics" (p.3).

### Working Group

The sample of this study was determined by purposive sampling method that targets a particular group of people. The advantage of this method is that the researcher can use prior knowledge to choose respondents (Bailey, 1994). In this regard, the participants of this study were 20 principals at primary and secondary schools in the 2011/2012 school year in Turkey. As far as the participants' demographic features are concerned, of these 20 principals, 16 of them were male and 4 female. As far as their experience is concerned, 5 principals had 6-10 years' administrative experience, 4 had 11-15, 3 had 16-20 and 8 had more than 20 years experience. Of them, 15 had graduate degrees while 5 had post graduate degrees.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data in this research were collected by using the “repertory grid” technique, which is a constructed interview method. The repertory grid technique procedure can best be characterized as a semi-structured interview (*face-to-face, computerized, or phone interview*) in which the respondent is confronted with a triad of elements and then asked to specify some important ways in which two of the elements are alike and, thereby, different from the third (Kerkhof, 2006).

In the present study, the data were collected by using the following procedure. First, in an e-mail, principals were informed about the purpose of the study, and they were asked if they could participate in this research voluntarily. Those who were invited to take part in the research consented after being assured of the confidentiality of the data to be gathered from them. It was promised that their identities would be kept in secret and their names would not be mentioned in any part of the study or shared with anyone else. Second, an interview was planned on an agreed-upon day with those who accepted the invitation, and the participants were visited on that date. The interviews were both recorded and written down with their permission and each took approximately 50-60 minutes.

In order to analyze the data, “content analysis” technique was used. This type of analysis usually aims to gather similar data on a topic and comment on it (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2008; Mayring, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000). The first step taken in the analysis of the data was the data organization procedures recommended by Bogdan & Biklen (1998). In organizing the data, the researcher revisited each interviewer and listened to each audiotape while reviewing the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the data. Each participant’s interview transcript was later analyzed according to the data analysis procedures described by Bogdan & Biklen (1998), which call for development of coding categories, mechanical sorting of the data, and analysis of the data within each coding category. Each participant’s interview was coded separately according to the participant’s views on principals’ role priorities as well as on various emerging themes and later, repeated themes was grouped into coding categories. It was done in three steps. These are category definition, exemplification, and codification regulation. First, the answers to each question were separated into meaningful categories, named, and coded. For example, the questions were conceptualized and named with some separate statements as role priorities: *leading the school, developing the school's future image–vision and managing change, staff leadership and their professional development, focusing on the individual, and managing school-community relationship*.

In the second step, the conceptualized statements were brought together. In the third step, it was intended to avoid repetition. In the last phase, the identified results were explained and related to each other. It was also intended to build a cause-and-effect relationship among the separate parts. Prior to interviewing ethical approval was granted by giving participants informed consent. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity of both participants and institutions. Therefore, the

views of principals on role priorities were coded as PSP1, PSP2 ... for those who are Primary School Principals and SSP1, SSP2....for Secondary School Principals.

The constant comparative approach was used in the process of organizing and analyzing the data. The use of the constant comparative method results in the saturation of categories and the emergence of theory. Theory emerges through continual analysis and doubling back for more data collection and coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser, 1992). In this method, each set of data collected (*interview transcripts*) were reviewed in search of key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that became categories of focus. The data for each participant were reviewed multiple times for confirmatory and contradictory statements until the data were organized into satisfactory categories and sub-codes to address the research question. The research was conducted mainly with the following semi-structured questions: *“As far as school management process is concerned, there are various roles you perform on daily basis. It is considered that these roles are mainly leading the school, shaping the school’s future–vision and managing change, staff leadership, and their professional development, focusing on the individual and managing the school community relationship. Some of them may have a high priority for you. Can you tell us the one that has the highest priority for you on the list while managing the school on daily basis?”*

### **Trustworthiness and Rigor**

Here, the interviewer played the role of facilitator and listener by asking questions and recording the answers without leading the participants. They were interviewed with semi-structured questions developed by the researcher himself. Interviews have been widely used lately as they provide in-depth answers. The questions were reviewed by six field experts to ensure content validity. The latest forms of the questions were developed with these experts' suggestions. In addition, the principals were content enough with the confidentiality of the research to get in-depth answers without any hesitation. The locations were chosen outside the school to avoid being affected by power relations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of this research in terms of transferability to the population. First, the sample was one of volunteers. These individuals are not necessarily representative of other principals within other school types. Therefore, the results are limited to this group of principals and caution should be exercised when attempting to infer about any of the results with regard to other populations. Secondly, the researcher was the main instrument of data analysis. The analyses and results are a product of the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The interpretation was based on the researcher’s knowledge in the area and his social location. Therefore, the theory-laden nature of the investigation is a recognized limitation as well as its strength. Additionally, the detailed and generous use of quotations and associated discussions of the results expose the researcher’s rationale. This information may help the reader assess the validity of the findings for themselves.

The study is the product of the researcher's perspective, and it is recognized that a different researcher may identify different features of importance within the same data sets (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2002). Finally, although the researcher tried to look for equal gender representation in this study, it was impossible because of the scarcity of women principals at educational institutions chosen for this study. Another study with purposeful selection of equal gender representations could be helpful in providing more insightful representations of views between the genders.

## RESULTS

The results obtained through this study are presented in this part. Among them, some striking extracts of principal were given below:

### Leading the School

One of the roles of principals is "leading the school" that means administrative chores like paperwork, telephones, meetings and daily routine. According to the data obtained on this issue, a principal stated,

*"It is my primary role to lead the school as it is one of the most important duties of all I think. Leading the school means managing instruction, teaching, and learning. The other roles are far issues while I am dealing with so many daily concerns. It takes a great deal of my time therefore; we do not have time and energy to think about other issues like shaping vision of the school and providing professional development. I know that I have to do a lot at school, but I do not have enough time for all (PSP2)."*

Another principal remarked,

*"Principals need to carry out their basic duties listed here but we can only focus on daily chores. I often do paperwork, answer phones and rush from a meeting to another. Therefore, I do not have time for other things like shaping vision, completing mission and professional development (PSP1)."*

A principal claimed;

*"I am like an office clerk these days. I have no time left from my daily workload. I cannot define my profession as ideal school administration. Instead, I pretend to manage. It is a kind of management that means carrying out basic administrative responsibilities. In fact, we have reserved schedules by the Ministry of Education. They want us to manage the school causing no problems (SSP2)."*

Another principal revealed

*"My role priority requires doing urgent things in daily rush by leaving others behind. Leading the school is my basic role in school administration process. I am not satisfied with my work in this system. I have a heavy workload. Sometimes I cannot do anything. I just do paperwork, rush to different meetings and answer phones. When it is time to go home, I understand that there is nothing remained of the day except for tiredness and boredom. My priority is to lead instruction (PSP20)."*

As can be understood from statements above, school principals are in circuit of official work during the day and it considered that they have no or limited time to deal with academic planning or facilities. Most of the principals who were interviewed consider their roles as office workers.

### **Shaping the School's Future – Vision and Managing Change**

Schools operate in a different world in which change is continuous. This change influences the process of their work at schools, as well as their perceptions, objectives, and implementations. Among them, a principal's basic role is shaping the school's future – vision and managing change. A principal claimed,

*"We need to estimate the change and prepare our schools for the future. This is shaping the school's future by setting vision and translating the mission to the staff. For this reason, principals should clarify the pedagogical and educational goals of the school. Most principals are not satisfied with their roles like me in the current system. We are not shaping school's future in the system because we cannot find any time for it, because we spend most of our time for managerial concerns which is the top on your list (PSP3)".*

Another principal added,

*"We are reactive managers essentially. In fact, we should be proactive leaders who foresee the change in the future, take precautions for the events and prepare the school for the changing world of work. However, neither have we a chance to cover daily chores nor shape the vision of the school. In fact, it is a rush and mess (PSP9)."*

A principal stated,

*"We cannot find time to cover our basic work. Therefore, shaping future is a dream for us while we are dealing with a lot of problems at our schools. We are troubleshooters at school. We start the day peacefully, but sometimes at the end of the day. When I think what I have done so far today, I get upset mostly. Even if we are thinking of doing something for the future, we discourage immediately because of our workload and central body that does not allow us to realize it (SSP12)."*

However, another principal said,

*"In fact, what we do here is to develop the vision of the school. I have a picture of my school in my mind. I see my school on the top of the most successful school list in 10 years' time. I approach it day by day. Despite its difficulty, anyone who has a vision about their schools, they can realize it (PSP13)."*

As can be found out from the statements above, most school principals do not have time and opportunity to shape the vision of the school. Instead, they carry out basic duties like paperwork heavily. Although change is vital for educational institutions in the 21st century, most schools do not have clear strategies to manage change successfully.

### Staff Leadership and Professional Development for Teachers

Another role of the principal is staff leadership and professional development of the teachers at school. In this respect, one principal remarked,

*“Professional development is a dream for schools as we are trying to catch up with the curriculum that is centrally prepared and scheduled. We have a central educational management body that designs and delivers everything itself such as curriculum, budget, professional development for teachers and some others. In this process, we do not have flexibility to do something different from what we are scheduled by the Ministry of National Education (SSP6)”*

Another principal mentioned,

*“We are scheduled to do what we have been told. During the term, we deal with daily problems. Later, school exams start and soon after teachers go on holiday. We have so-called seminars held by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). Most of them are dysfunctional and really waste of time. They are not organized to meet teachers’ professional needs. Instead, they are held to keep teachers at school legally. There are good seminars and programs that we can benefit from, but we have no authority, power and economic strength to provide them for our teachers. To sum up, of these roles leading the school role fits the best for our situations (PSP10)”*

Moreover, a principal stated,

*“MEB has a central body that does not give us so much chance and budget for professional development of the staff. As a result, current situation affects principals’ work quality. We know what our teachers need, but we cannot meet their needs. We do not have freedom to design our staff development policies ourselves. Schools are not performing well in that respect these days. These things discourage our work and make us feel angry. If a principal wants to develop his/her staff, it is not easy as s/he has limited resources. The central body of the school system does not allow us to do new and different things. Thus, staff leadership/professional development is not my priority in my management process (SSP6)”*

As one principal put it,

*“MEB body controls everything and we do not have much flexibility in the system. We are just asked to lead the school causing fewer problems. We try to provide opportunities for teachers’ professional development with our own initiations and resources by using our personal relations because we know that teachers really need (PSP2).”*

On the other hand, a principal claimed,

*“Staff development is not our work, because MEB organizes it regularly. They prepare in-service training seminars. We announce them to the staff, but they do not want to join them. I do what they want me to do (PSP8).”*

From their statements, it can be seen that most principals complain about central body which does not let them develop professional development of teachers. They do not have authority, power and fund to organize these kinds of facilities at their schools. While they are dealing with a lot of daily chores, they cannot do this.

### **Focusing on the Individual**

As schools are social institutions, individuals are basic concerns there. By focusing the individual, school principals as instructional leaders are committed to provide success of each student. In this manner, one principal alleged that,

*“We must focus on the individuals at schools. If they feel valuable themselves and their needs are met, they can be successful. We must not consider teachers and students as objects at schools. Principals' priorities are important in this sense. As an instructional leader, I should create time and opportunity to meet their real life needs and enhance their capacities even though it is difficult most of the time. To be honest, while dealing with many other things, we neglect students and teachers (PSP1).”*

According to a principal,

*“It is essential to focus on the individual. If a student does not feel appreciated and valuable at school, s/he cannot be successful. However, it is impossible to go out of my office most of the time to get in touch with students or others (SSP4).”*

Another principal mentioned,

*“I do lots of things to make students feel comfortable at school as if they are at their homes. We are here to make our students successful and feel safe related to either their courses or identities. We enhance lessons by using technology and other tools. I try to deal with every single student, but sometimes there are other distractions like office work (PSP8).”*

A principal affirmed,

*“If a student is in an unsafe atmosphere, s/he feels uncomfortable and restless. Naturally, this may lead to some problems at schools. However, I think when you lead a school well, these problems may be eliminated. Sometimes, daily chores prevent us from focusing on the individual (SSP7).”*

Another principal expressed,

*“Focusing on individuals by taking their cultural sides primarily may help things go better. Personally, I think dealing with both psychological and academic sides of individuals is important but not enough. It is difficult to implement it at all (PSP5).”*

It is known that emphasis on the scholastic aspects may be beneficial for the individuals at school. In this sense, the principal's reference should be students, their social and academic achievement and also their individual welfare as well. Here, principals seem that they do not focus on individuals adequately.

### **Managing the Relationship between the School and the Community**

Within this context, it is important to manage the relationships between the school and community. In this respect, one principal claimed,

*“As far as school-community relationship is concerned, functions of the schools have been reshaped recently. In the latest educational context, if an institution is not economically valuable, it does not meet needs of the community. If the services they produce do not make money, it is waste of time. We try to*

*cooperate with the community, but there are rules and regulations that we have to obey at the same time. They prevent us from doing a lot of things (SSP3)."*

Another principal stated,

*"School-community relationship has a great importance in the 21st century. However, at schools academic issues are prior. Keeping this on our minds, we should set a balance between purpose of the school and expectations of the community. In fact, we cannot ignore the demands of the society and isolate ourselves from the society. This puts a heavy pressure on our shoulders. Although I know it, as a principal, I do not have strong relations with the community (PSP4)."*

One principal specified,

*"For me, school-community relation is important. These discussions help schools to broaden their visions. There is a positive correlation between these discussions and school success. As a result of the competition which already exists in the society, the quality of the outcomes has been increasing. I do not have time and chance to build this relation, because I have some other managerial duties like paperwork heavily (SSP2)."*

A principal stated,

*"Discussions on school-community relations have changed the meaning of school administration. School-community relations make positive contributions to the educational system because schools are behind community now, but we are not free to do that as public institutions (PSP10)."*

Establishing positive relations between the school and the community is a big necessity to realize the school's vision and goals. It can also contribute to build flexible relations with stakeholders. However, it can be understood that schools do not have strong relations with the environment at a desired level and some principals are not aware of the significance of this process.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study purposed to determine school principals' role priorities at schools in the Turkish educational system and a number of results were obtained through this research. According to one of the results derived from this study, principals of this sample carry out leading the school role primarily. The school principals who were interviewed here emphasize that they have too much paperwork and daily rush like answering official reports, letters, making phone calls, having interviews with parents, teachers and students. For this reason, they claim that they have no time, power and authority for other management dimensions such as shaping the school's future, leadership and teachers' professional development, focusing on the individual and finally, managing the school-community relationship. This may stem from principals' workload on daily basis. In fact, it is considered that they have to deal with a lot of problems ranging from repairing broken taps and windows to providing a peaceful atmosphere for both teachers and students at school. This is

consistent with the results obtained by Graham (1997), Cuban (1988), Kremer (1983), Martin & Willover (1981), Gümüseli (2009), Akçay & Başar (2004), Kaykanacı (2003), Stronge (1988). In these researches, it is alleged that principals spend most of their time on administrative duties defined as routine tasks like paperwork, meetings and phone calls while they have little or no instructional ties. This is also congruent with the results revealed in Strang (2007) and Doud & Keller's studies (1998). They found that leaders adopt more managerial roles such as directing and monitoring learning than leadership roles like facilitating learning and mentoring teachers. On the other hand, Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) state that principals have primary roles like program development, relations with parents and community that mean leading a school which requires deep knowledge on program development, instruction and student achievement.

A further result shows that although they have limited time left from daily chores, they try to focus on individual as their second priority. In this management type, principals attach priority to student achievement mostly. Even though they do not spend so much time to deal with their personal concerns, it is one of the top priorities in their management practices. They think that what they are trying to do is to serve students' achievement ultimately. This may stem from pressures that come from both parents and community about student achievement in the central exams. In Turkey, students sit several certain exams to get a good place at a reputable high school or a college/university. This shows similarity with the results obtained by many studies. In these researches, it is revealed that principals' basic role is to facilitate learning by coping with personal and academic concerns of students (Foley, 2001; Bartel, 1990; O'Hair & Reitzug, 1997; Parks & Baret, 1994; Hall, 2005).

According to another result obtained in this study, even though the principals hope to do so, most of them do not have authority, power and opportunity to provide professional development facilities for teachers. Principals claim that these kinds of programs are usually planned without considering teachers' real needs. This is probably because of the educational system in Turkey. In the Turkish Educational System, these kinds of developmental facilities are mostly planned, organized and conducted centrally. It is contrary to the results that were derived from Kapusuzoğlu's research (2007). In that study, she discovered that principals were organizers of human relations and capacity. According to Yılmaz (2009) school principals focus heavily on staff work, educational and instructional issues, student affairs, school financial administration and school-community. In another study, Aksu, Gemici & İşler (2006) found that principals focus on instructional support, facilities, resource management, problem solving, supervision and professional development of teachers, quality observation, teacher evaluation and motivation.

Furthermore, it was also found in this research principals spend less time in building school-community relations. Although school-community relations have become more important recently, it is surprising that the principals of this sample do not have much effort to build these relations. It is considered that principals in this

sample work for public schools that are centrally funded and they do not have worries to find resources and students. As public schools are free of charge, there is a high demand for these schools. Therefore, they do not feel themselves in the need of doing anything to enroll students to their schools. Since they do not compete for resources and enrollments, they have no worries as much as their colleagues in private schools.

The final result is that even though setting the school's vision is crucial for schools, almost all principals have little time to shape their schools' future and vision. This may result from the central administrative body which controls all the parts of the system in one hand. It is thought that administrative duties have higher priority for principals rather than shaping schools' future. Findings of this research are supported by earlier studies conducted by Kaynakçı (2000), Alkan (1999), Aksoy (1993) and Başar (1981).

## CONCLUSION

The results obtained through this study reveal that principals of this sample carry out "leading the school" role primarily having no or limited time, authority, power or interest in the other management areas during a one-day-experience. This means that school principals spend most of their time on managerial tasks and office work like paperwork, meetings, phone-calls, daily rush like answering official reports, letters, meeting people, teachers and students. This may mean that principals spend less time on academic purposes. It can be concluded that although administrative tasks are important in school administration process, educational purposes and pedagogic goals should not be ignored. They should have higher priority on the school principals' daily agendas. However, it is considered that school principals change their role priorities during their administrative practices on daily basis. It is certain that principals' basic priority must be to improve the education, teaching and learning which lead to student achievement. In fact, they should spend most of their time and energy on academic and pedagogic goals as well as management issues like leading the school. This does not mean that other management aspects are less important in school administration process. Indeed, these roles should be balanced and none of these roles should be neglected.

### Implications for the Researchers and Practitioners

The recommendations reached through the results obtained in this study and implications for further research and practitioners are below:

- Educational system in Turkey is very centralized. It prevents principals from making quick decisions about academic issues on either staff development or shaping school's vision. Therefore, schools and principals should have autonomy and flexibility to decide freely.
- School principals' daily work load is heavy. With this work-load, they are stucked in paperwork and phone-calls. Therefore, co-principalship should be

considered. While one principal is involved in academic issues, the other one can deal with administrative chores.

- School-community relations are crucial for school development but, it is not at a desired level. Principals should be in touch with community to have better school-community relations.
- It can be seen that principals do not have a concern of shaping a vision for their schools. It could be improved by decentralization of the system and giving a chance of flexibility to the principal.
- Another study can be conducted with quantitatively and qualitatively with a greater sample from other cultures to make comparisons internationally.

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