Teacher Empowerment Strategies: Reasons for Nonfulfillment and Solution Suggestions[*]

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Abstract. This research was carried out to determine the empowerment strategies school principals should implement and the reasons for not being empowering. It was conducted with four elementary school teachers and four school principals in a city in the Aegean Region in the 2017-2018 academic year. In the study, descriptive phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. According to the results, it was revealed that the empowerment strategies to be implemented by school principals were classified under the categories of physical and psychological support, communication, school functioning, and teacher autonomy. The reasons for not making teacher empowerment by school principals were determined as personal, administrative, financial, and limited authority reasons. What the Ministry of National Education should do for teacher empowerment was revealed. They should adopt policies that support personal development and teacher autonomy, increase the authority of school principals, and make changes in the legislation. Following the findings, various suggestions were made on such issues as increasing financial resources that hinder empowerment.

Key words: Elementary school, teacher, principal, empowerment, teacher empowerment.

Introduction

Teachers are the most important keystones of schools, having an important influence on the healthy functioning of the education systems, the realisation of educational activities and the development of organisational goals. Since today's youngers are tomorrow's elders, teachers have the most significant role in shaping the future. Indeed, it would not be wrong to describe teachers metaphorically as the architects of the future. Since teachers are the architects of society, increasing the qualifications of teachers are among the most important responsibilities of states.

Teachers should be encouraged, empowered, and supported in various ways to increase their qualifications and unlock their potential (Richards, 2005). In addition to increasing the qualifications of teachers should also be supported in various ways (Podolsky et al., 2019). Among these are such supports as improving teachers' social and personal rights, meeting the needs of the physical setting, professional and personal development, educational materials, valuing their ideas, and ensuring their participation in the decision-making processes (Short, 1992). These refer to the empowerment of teachers by the state or school principals.

The concept of empowerment is derived from the word "power". According to the Turkish Language Association (2021), power influences people physically, mentally, and morally or resisting this influence. In another definition, power is defined as the ability of a person to make others behave as they desire (Kocel, 2014). Empowerment is utilising the power emerging with common synergy consciously, purposefully, and in a controlled manner (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Empowerment is when employees are motivated by their increasing knowledge and expertise to use initiative in their duties (White, 1992). They feel they can control the problems (Foster, 1990) to perform tasks for the organisation. Increasing the authority of the staff in their work, having more decision rights and autonomy at work (Altug, 1997), and providing a free work environment where the employees can decide what to do and how, instead of emphasising what the manager should tell them to do is also called empowerment (Elma & Demir, 2012). Empowerment also contributes to the professional development of employees. Considering cognitive, motivational, and all other variables, empowerment can be expressed as a tool to increase the self-confidence of employees (Rehm, 1989).

The most emphasised concepts in the definitions of empowerment mentioned above are encouragement, self-sufficiency, and a free working environment (Kimwarey et al., 2014). Empowered employees are influenced by their leaders, who follow their leaders' behaviours and internalise their duties (Ganiban et al., 2019). Empowering teachers in education systems is the task of school principals (Vrhovnik et al., 2018). The principals aware of this fact acknowledge that empowering an individual affects the whole organisation, opening various development paths for other individuals. In addition to its positive reflection on the relations, this situation ensures the improvement of the organisation (Harpell & Andrews, 2010) because empowered individuals share their knowledge, skills, opportunities, and visions with others (Alosaimi, 2016; Ledesma & Joyas, 2015; Longwell-McKean, 2012). For this reason, it should be noted that the

situation is not to be viewed only from the perspective of an empowered individual (Kiral, 2019). Principals' awareness of this empowers organisational development (Paynevandy, 2016) and use various empowerment strategies individually or synchronously (Kimwarey et al., 2014).

Today, principals look for and use different empowerment methods and strategies to succeed (Akcakaya, 2004) because the individuals working there must be empowered. The principals know empowerment for an organisation to achieve its goals (Celik & Konan, 2020). Empowerment strategies and tactics are required to create a positive organisational identity, which is important for prompting employees (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). For this reason, principals should be able to use various empowerment strategies to increase the potential of their employees, motivate them in various ways and prompt them for work (B. Kiral, 2015). Therefore, principals should be empowering leaders (E. Kiral, 2020; Konan & Celik, 2017) and use empowerment strategically. It can be said that using empowerment strategically is beneficial not only for the education system but also for the school, teachers, and students.

Teachers Empowerment Strategies of School Principals

When examining the literature, it is found that school leaders use empowerment strategies such as rewarding, supporting teachers, communication, trust, developing a shared administration structure, and creating a decision-making environment (Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018; Celik & Konan, 2020; Cetin & Kiral, 2018; Ganiban et al., 2019; B. Kiral, 2015; Konan & Celik, 2017, etc.). The empowerment strategies implemented by school principals are described below.

Rewarding. One of the empowerment strategies is to empower through rewarding (Cheong et al., 2019). Rewards are divided into two; internal and external rewards. Internal rewards contribute psychologically to establishing a sense of achievement in the individuals. Praising and appreciating the employee and ensuring that the employee is recognised within and outside the organisation are internal rewards. External rewards are the economic or physical rewards presented by the administration. Promotion, pay rise, and extra pay is external rewards (Rhoades et al., 2001). It is revealed that rewarding in various ways increases employees' motivation, desire, and success (Maslow, 1943). Since rewarding increases the motivation of employees, principals hope to get the efficiency they wish from the employees by giving them economic, physical, or psychological rewards (McGregor, 1966). In this way, principals will be able to direct the behaviours of individuals and positively influence their social habits and attitudes (Ozkalp & Kirel, 2016). In their study, Blase and Kirby (2000) have also mentioned the strategies used by principals to affect teachers positively. According to them, the most effective strategy is to use various rewarding methods. For example, teachers value the attention of other teachers. The principals aware of this situation should reward the teacher who has proven their achievement to increase teacher performance. As a result, principals receive attention and warmth from teachers, and in a sense, benefit from this rewarding situation that allows them to be appreciated (Acaray, 2010). With rewarding,

the teachers' efforts in classroom management are increased, contributing to the positive change of the school climate and culture (Rangel et al., 2020) and helping the school achieve its goals (Yunus et al., 2021).

Support teachers. When the literature is examined, it can be seen that principals support employees in three ways. These are *emotional support* (i.e. caring and accepting the employee, showing affection, helping the employee to overcome difficulties at work etc.); *informational support* (i.e. giving feedback to employees about their performance, guiding and mentoring them etc.); and *financial support* (i.e. providing tools and materials to employees and supporting them financially) (Bhanthumnavin, 2001, cited in Kalagan, 2009). School principals provide support by enabling the personal development of teachers, promoting their professional development, providing materials, and helping to solve problems (Ahrari et al., 2021). Teacher empowerment is about creating opportunities (Yunus et al., 2021). Components of supporting teachers include providing them with opportunities for professional development, helping them solve school-related problems, implementing an open-door policy by principals, being available by phone, and ensuring that teachers feel that principals are there for them at all times (B. Kiral, 2015). It is always motivating for teachers to listen to them and try to solve the problem, respect their ideas in any case and make them feel trusted are motivating factors for teachers when they experience a problem with the students or parents (Blase & Blase, 1996). Teachers should be encouraged to perform all the school-based tasks on innovating, revealing their creativity, and taking risks for success (White, 1992). It is also important for school principals to support teachers' professional development activities (Rangel et al., 2020). As long as they act in this way, teachers' internalisation of their profession will increase, and thus, their job satisfaction (Romanish, 1993) and organisational commitments (B. Kiral, 2020) will increase. The more teachers improve themselves in their profession, the more beneficial they will be for their students, and the easier it will be for their students to reach the knowledge and skills they need to acquire. This situation will also enable the school principals to achieve the school's goals in a much shorter period.

Communicating effectively with teachers. Communication makes the school organisation dynamic by ensuring the establishment and continuity of the relationships between the stakeholders inside and outside the school. The administrative communication enables the principal to influence the teachers by communicating with them effectively, making teachers respond to the principal by acting under the school's goals (Kaya, 2007). Principals should set the necessary environment for teachers to be organised to express themselves at any time and should pay attention to the positive organisational climate (Rangel et al., 2020; Yunus et al., 2021). They should guide teachers in the methods and techniques of creating effective classrooms, being aware that effective schools can be achieved through effective classrooms (Balci, 2014). To present effective administration and quality education, principals should ensure that all school staff are happy to work and act together using communication channels (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013; Lacks, 2016).

Providing trust. Another strategy of teacher empowerment is to establish a mutual trust relationship between the principals and teachers within the school (Kimwarey et al., 2014). Embedding trust within the school environment is related to various people. Creating a sense of trust in a school is time-consuming (Acaray, 2010). To ensure this trust, school principals should be helpful (Akbasli & Dis, 2019), be sensitive to the problems faced by teachers in their professional or private life, and be interested in them sincerely (Blase & Blase, 1996). Principals are optimistic about emphasising the positive side of the events (Keser & Kocabas, 2014); honesty and truthfulness show that principals are sincere with teachers and open to all debates (Blase & Blase, 1996). If the principals possess these characteristics, they will create an atmosphere of trust. The fact that the principals give responsibility and authority to their employees leaves them alone with their job and explains that the principal trusts them (Kimwarey et al., 2014). It is important for the administration to trust the employees and for the employees to trust the administration. In such an environment, employees' morale and motivation will be higher (Foster, 1990). The more efficient employees will make an effort to come up with and develop new ideas. The employee with high self-confidence believes in the success and development, behaves and works eagerly to contribute to the organisation (Barutcugil, 2004).

Developing a shared administration structure and decision-making environment. Another empowerment factor that principals should consider is taking joint decisions and sharing the results by participating in the decision (Conway & Calzi, 1995). Even though it seems simple, enabling participation in the decision-making process can be difficult for principals (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988). The principal informing teachers about the state of affairs in the school may motivate teachers internally (Kang et al., 2021), or forming problem-solving teams within the school and involving teachers in the decision-making process may be another route to empowerment (Short & Greer, 1997, cited in Acaray, 2010). Participation in decisions accelerates the need for individual autonomy of teachers working in an organisation and enables the administration to take more effective decisions (Spreitzer, 1996) and solve the organisation's problems more realistically.

For this reason, school principals need to realise and implement participation in the decision practice, which is a contemporary incentive tool (Duman, 2014). Participating in shared administration decisions may be related to such issues as organising programs, having a voice in educational activities, student discipline, and school budget (White, 1992). Besides, ensuring the active participation of teachers in the decision-making process during meetings, activating formal or informal structures when necessary, encouraging their participation in the teaching-learning process are among the behaviours enabling teachers' empowerment (Blase & Blase, 1996). The employees' participation in decisions within organisations is very important for the proper functioning of administration (E. Kiral, 2015). Various expectations are underlying the participation of employees in the decision-making processes. While aiming to make a healthier decision by benefiting from the expertise and skills of those involved in the decision, one also aims to gain the respect of, influence and encourage individuals by showing confidence in their abilities and skills (Aydin, 2017). The principal who considers

empowerment should act in a planned, programmed, and goal-oriented manner. For this, they must plan what to do at first, decide which strategies to use and implement them (B. Kiral, 2015). The phases principals follow before empowerment, in other words, the empowerment process, are given below in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Empowerment Process
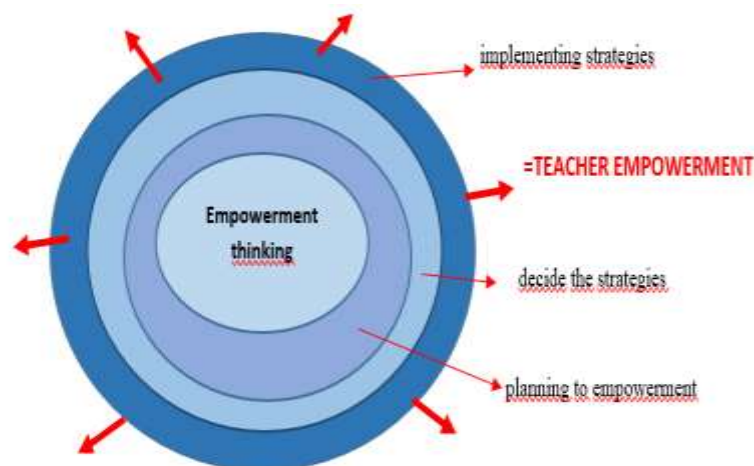
As seen in Figure 1, the thought of empowerment should be shaped in principals' minds before they make empowerment. If the figure given above is considered the "mind of the principal", empowerment for principals first begins as a thought. This thinking then requires principals to do the planning. They have to answer such questions as *"how, where, when and which" "Which teacher will be empowered and how? When and where will the empowerment be made? How long will the empowerment continue? Which strategies will be implemented?"* After carefully planning and thinking about such questions, principals should choose the appropriate strategies because the valid strategy for one teacher may not be appropriate for another. Once the strategies are selected, they should be implemented intentionally and consciously. As shown in the figure, the thick red arrows represent the intentional and predetermined strategies that principals implement in their environment for empowerment. After the empowerment strategies are implemented intentionally and willingly, the strategy should be renewed when necessary; empowerment activities should not be performed only once; they should be continuous.

As stated above, leader school principals intentionally and consciously implement several empowerment strategies to empower teachers (Kiral, 2019). First and foremost, it is about creating a positive communication environment by motivating teachers and supporting them in school, rather than involving them in the processes of management, school functioning, decision-making, and restricting them (Fidan Toprakci, 2019). Principals are aware that empowered teachers provide higher quality services to their students in line with the school's goals because they are more efficient in educational and instructional activities, have higher job satisfaction and self-confidence, and are aware of their potentials and strengths (Romanish, 1993; Sprague, 1992). Thanks to the empowerment strategies implemented by school principals, benefits such as being jointly

responsible for what is carried out within the school, providing the ability to see and solve the problems in administration, developing a unique and free perspective (Yenilmez & Yolcu, 2007) can be provided. Therefore, it can be said that it is important to determine the views and suggestions of principals and teachers to determine the empowerment strategies implemented by school principals to teachers and make teacher empowerment activities more effectively.

In reviewing the studies, it was found that there are numerous quantitative studies on teacher empowerment (Avidov-Ungar & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2018; Celik & Konan, 2020; Ganiban et al., 2019; B. Kiral, 2015; B. Kiral, 2020; Melenyzer, 1990, Short, 1992; Wilcoxen et al., 2019). There are also literature review studies (Akcakaya, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Foster, 1990; Kiral, 2019; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990); however, there have been few qualitative studies on teacher empowerment (Cetin & Kiral, 2018; Yin, 2018). For this reason, it is thought that this study will provide a profound perspective to the literature in the light of its qualitative findings and will guide school principals.

Some studies on empowerment, e.g. Avidov-Ungar and Arviv-Elyashiv (2018)'s study on the relationship between teachers' professional roles, empowerment, and career development; Celik and Konan (2020)'s study on the relationship between principals' empowering leadership, teachers' self-efficacy, and organisational citizenship behaviours; Ganiban et al. (2019)' study on the antecedents of teachers' empowerment; B. Kiral (2015)'s description of the relationship between teachers' empowerment by school administrators and their cynicism; Melenyzer (1990)'s description of the events that explain teachers' empowerment success; Wilcoxen et al. (2019)'s study on empowerment of novice teachers through wellbeing support; Cetin & Kiral (2018)'s identification of teachers' and administrators' level of knowledge about teachers' empowerment; Yin (2018)'s study on teachers' empowerment as thoughts.

In the literature, there is a study conducted for Hong Kong schools by Wan (2005), which includes empowerment strategies in the compilation type, and a compilation study by Reep and Grier (1992). None of these studies investigated teacher empowerment strategies and why principals could not empower through qualitative research. For this reason, it is thought that this study will give a deep perspective to the literature in the light of qualitative findings and will guide school principals. In addition, it is believed that determining the empowerment experiences of teachers and principals in detail and revealing the experiences on this subject will set an example for practitioners.

Teacher empowerment strategies are sometimes implemented and sometimes cannot be implemented due to legal obstacles or other reasons. This study was conducted to reveal the empowerment strategies implemented by school principals according to the views of school principals and teachers and the reasons for nonfulfillment. Following this general aim, the answers to the questions below were sought. According to the experiences of teachers and principals/assistants;

- What are the empowerment strategies that school principals implement and should implement?

- What are the reasons for school principals not implementing empowerment strategies?
- What are the suggestions regarding what the Ministry of National Education should do for school principals to empower teachers?

Method

Research Design

This research was carried out in the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs, using the interview technique. The phenomenon investigated was *"teacher empowerment strategies implemented by school principals"* In phenomenological research, data sources are the individuals or groups who have experienced the phenomenon that the research has focused on and who can explain and reflect this phenomenon (Ersoy, 2016). Phenomenology design is not solely a description. It aims to reveal people's experiences, attitudes, perceptions of a phenomenon, the meaning of this phenomenon in the individual itself, and the structure and essence of the researched phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). This research is *"descriptive phenomenology"* and aims to question and describe the participants' experiences about the phenomenon (Kiral, 2021). Human behaviours aim to describe experiences independent of the individual's social environment (Ersoy, 2016). In this study, the aim is to describe the experiences of individuals. Even before the study, principals and teachers said that they experienced and knew the empowerment of teachers because principals and teachers have previous training on this subject. The first researcher gave informative training and meeting on teacher empowerment beforehand. Before the research, the principals and teachers stated that they experienced and knew teacher empowerment because principals and teachers had already received training on this subject. Indeed, the schools selected had already been chosen accordingly. For this reason, the concept was known and experienced in advance. Since it was assumed to be used by school principals/assistants, the study was conducted in a phenomenological design.

Participants

The research was conducted with four teachers and four school principals/assistants working in two different elementary schools in a city in the Aegean Region in the 2017-2018 academic year. The schools were selected using deviant case sampling, which is of the purposeful sampling methods. The deviant situation is that one of the two schools determined through the District Directorate of National Education is located in an advantaged region in terms of socio-economical aspect. In contrast, the other school is in a disadvantaged region. In addition, to determine whether the schools are advantageous and disadvantageous in socio-economic terms, the researchers examined the prices of rental houses in the two regions. They decided on the schools according to

this criterion because the rental prices of the houses are one of the important elements that give information about the socio-economic level of a region.

According to Yildirim and Simsek (2005), deviant situations provide richer data than normal situations, enabling an in-depth and multi-dimensional understanding of the research subject. While selecting the participants in the schools, the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. The criterion in this research was that the school principals' and teachers' seniority was over 15 years. This aimed to interview the participants with higher seniority and benefit from their experiences. It was also noted that the participants had worked at the same school for at least 10 years or more. It was assumed that they knew each other better because they had worked together at the same school for at least 10 years.

The participants' identities were kept secret in the study, and code names were used. One of the teacher participants was a male, whereas the other three were female elementary school teachers. Kaan, Esra, Aysel, and Sevgi were given to the teacher participants as code names. It has been observed that the average seniority of the teachers is 22 years, and the average working years at the school they are currently in is 13 years. Two of the participants were school principals, and the other two were principal assistants. Code names were given to school principals/assistants, such as Ahmet, Onder, Yilmaz, and Cemre. Three of them were male, and one was female. It has been observed that the average seniority of school principals is 24 years, and the average working years at the current school is 12 years. Within the scope of the research, it was attempted to get the views of the participants who had previous knowledge and experience of the concept because it was considered that the individuals who would give the best information about this concept were those who knew and experienced it.

Data Collection Tool and Process

As the study's data collection tool, "A *semi-structured interview form on teacher empowerment strategies*" was used for school principals/assistants and teachers. The literature was reviewed, and the studies on the subject were searched to prepare the interview form. A draft interview form was prepared and presented to two faculty members for expert opinion based on the data obtained. The faculty members examined the interview form in terms of content validity, and a semi-structured interview form consisting of four questions to determine teacher empowerment strategies were created. After making the necessary refinements, a pilot application was made with the form created, and the interview form was finalised by the recommendations and applied to the participants. In the research, these questions were asked to the teachers *"What are the teacher empowerment strategies in your experiences?", "What strategies do you think school principals should implement so that the teachers are empowered?", "Does your school principal implement the teacher empowerment strategies you have mentioned?", "If yes, which one do they implement?" or "If not, what do you think about the reasons?".* In addition to the above two questions, principals/assistants were also asked, *"Which of the empowerment strategies you mentioned do you implement?" and "What are the*

reasons you cannot reinforce?". Since the two questions of school principals and teachers were different, two separate forms were used.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process was carried out after obtaining the official research permission from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. The researchers recorded the interviews performed at different periods when the teachers and school principals were available. The data was recorded via a voice recorder by obtaining permission from the interviewers. The teachers and school principals who participated in the study were informed about the research. Besides, for the participants to express themselves explicitly, it was stated that their identities would not be used in the study. Thus, each participant was given a different code name. The audio recordings were first listened to by the participants, and their approval was obtained. Then the interviews were finished by expressing that they would be transcribed and given to them again as a written text. The interviews lasted around 40 minutes on average. Following this, the audio recordings were listened to and written on a computer. Then, the edited data was presented to the participants, and it was confirmed whether they had any comments they wanted to add or remove.

The participants' written views were analysed using the content analysis method in data analysis. In qualitative data analysis, the researchers' comments and the emerging categories must be related in a meaningful manner. In this regard, it is extremely significant to analyse the data through content analysis and reveal the facts that may be hidden within the data (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). The concepts and themes that the descriptive approach cannot recognise can be discovered through content analysis. The main process in content analysis is gathering similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes, organising and interpreting them so that the reader can understand (Merriam, 2009, Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). In this study, the researchers determined primarily important statements for content analysis. Then, similar and common expressions were grouped, descriptions were created, and categories and subcategories were formed by combining the necessary ones. Later, the abbreviated expressions were written under the category and subcategories (Moustakas, 1994; cited in Ersoy, 2016).

Credibility

For the research's credibility, the participants' responses were verified during the interview, and after transcribing them, direct quotations and exact statements were included in the research (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Expert opinions were obtained in creating the form, and pilot applications were made to ensure the face and content validity of the interview forms. The pilot applications were not included in the study; they were only performed to test whether the questions were easy to understand or not. Before starting the content analysis, the categories and subcategories in the findings section were created by the researchers, an expert Turkish language, and an

academic in educational administration. Then, one person coded the data, and the results were compared. The coding was presented to an expert and an academic staff in educational sciences, and control coding was made. Then, the research reliability was calculated using the Miles and Huberman (1994) formula. The reliability of this research was determined as 98%.

The Role of the Researchers

The researchers directed their research questions to the participants away from their personal opinions and prejudices throughout the research process. They managed the process objectively at each phase of the interviews, data analysis, revealing, and interpreting the findings. Before starting the interviews in the research, written permission was obtained from the relevant Provincial Directorate of National Education, and then the interviews were conducted. The researchers followed the scientific and professional ethical rules during the research process. They avoided the expressions and directions that would reveal the identities and school names of the teachers and principals participating in the study. While direct quotations were given during the reporting process, the researchers did not include the expressions that would reveal the participants in the study. In the direct quotations made, the participants' views were given as they were, without making any changes or corrections. Each school principal and teacher participating in the study was given a code name more comfortably and sincerely.

Findings

This section presents the findings that emerged from the data analysis from the perspective of classroom teachers and principals concerning the empowerment strategies implemented by principals and the interpretations of these findings.

Empowerment Strategies

Regarding revealing the empowerment strategies, the participants were asked, "What are the teacher empowerment strategies in your opinion? What strategies do you think school principals should implement so that the teachers are empowered?". The findings obtained from the content analysis performed to examine the general views of school principal/assistant and teachers regarding teacher empowerment are given below in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, four categories were revealed regarding empowerment. These categories were; support, communication, school functioning, and teacher autonomy. The support category was divided into two subcategories: physical and psychological support. The participants emphasised their views of motivating and rewarding more explicitly under the subcategory of psychological support. Among the views expressed under the subcategory of physical support, meeting physical needs and enhancing the physical environment came to the forefront. Under the category of communication,

ensuring teachers' integration and participation in the decision-making was expressed more. Under teacher autonomy, the freedom of using reference books was mentioned.

Table 1.

Empowerment Strategies to be Implemented by School Principals

Categories	Sub Category	Codes	Teachers				Principals/Assist.			
			Kaan	Esra	Aysel	Sevgi	Ahmet	Onder	Yilmaz	Cemre
Support	Psychological	Motivating	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
		Rewarding		✓			✓		✓	✓
		Being with the teacher		✓		✓			✓	
		Ensuring personal development			✓					
		Improving status	✓							
		Encouraging for professional development		✓				✓		
		Making feel valuable	✓	✓						✓
		Providing career ladder				✓				
	Physical	Physical needs (provide material supply etc.)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
		Improving the physical environment			✓					
Communication		Ensuring that teachers are integrated					✓		✓	
		Communicating in all matters	✓							
		Organising an out-of-school activity							✓	
School Functioning		Participation in the decision		✓					✓	✓
		Developing common ideas for problem-solving								✓
		Fair distribution of tasks			✓					
		Creating a democratic environment								✓
Teacher Autonomy		Freedom to use resource books	✓		✓			✓		
		Training program flexibility			✓					
		In-class freedom	✓							

The views of the participants regarding empowerment strategies are given below:

> If you want to empower the teacher, there should be fair work distribution within the school. Class sizes must be equal. The employees who are hardworking and who are not must be distinguished from each other. The effort you spend should draw attention. At least, you should be appreciated so that you don't get discouraged. Nepotism must end. You shouldn't hurt the teacher by using daily politics. Our opinions should be asked when decisions affecting us are being made (Aysel).

> The teacher should be supported and backed up to empower the teacher. In the problems arising, the teacher should not be scapegoated when a parent or a student complains. The teacher should be valued, and the teacher should feel this. The principals should not interfere with the classroom. Educational administrators should trust the teacher. Also, teachers should trust their principals.

> Having tolerance and sincerely listening to our troubles will make us feel valuable in a peaceful school environment (Esra).

> The directive about rewarding should be revised to empower teachers. Activities in terms of communicating effectively within the school, ensuring teachers integration inside and outside the school, and organising inclusion activities may empower teachers (Yilmaz).

> Teachers are very valuable to us. Common ideas should be paid attention to in identifying and solving the problems. Indeed, making the teachers feel valued, motivating them, creating a democratic environment, ensuring the teachers' participation in the decision-making, and being in contact with them on every issue is our main duty as principals (Cemre).

Empowerment Strategies Implemented

In terms of revealing the empowerment strategies implemented by school principals, the teachers were asked, "Does your school principal implement the teacher empowerment strategies you have mentioned? If so, which ones do they implement? If not, what do you think about the reasons?". The school principals were asked, "Which of the empowerment strategies you have mentioned do you implement? What are the reasons for not being able to make reinforcement?". All of the participants stated that they were sometimes making empowerment, but sometimes not. The empowerment strategies implemented by the school principals are given below in Table 2.

Table 2 revealed that principals/assistants and teachers expressed their opinions regarding support. The teachers stated that their principals exhibited psychological support; on the other hand, the principals stated that they empowered their teachers in terms of *physical, personal development, and psychological support* aspects. The teachers did not indicate the physical and personal development supports their principals or the principals provided or did not regard these aspects as support. The views of participants regarding the empowerment strategies implemented are given below.

> Sometimes he reinforces us; sometimes, he can't. Our principal is always confused about whose side he will be on regarding the problems faced. In the end, you see that he is on everyone's side. He behaves politically. There are times he has a tolerance. He listens to our problems sincerely (Sevgi).

> I make an effort to organise seminars and courses on the subject teachers feel deficient (educational technology use, cooperation, teaching methods, techniques, etc.) to empower teachers. I do my best to provide the working environment they wish. I try to supply the tools and equipment as much as I can according to our budget. I get suggestions from teachers about which subjects they would like to have training on (Onder).

> Most teachers can talk to me about their requests. At first, some were hesitant to talk, but as time passed and as they got to know me and our communication got stronger, they began to behave more comfortably. I am trying to improve the working conditions. I try to be friendly and sincere as much as I can. I am trying to organise seminars and courses. I celebrate the teachers' birthdays. I pay great attention to being with them on special days and sad days (Cemre).

Table 2.

Empowerment Strategies Implemented by Principals

Category	Codes	Teachers				Principals/Assist.			
		Kaan	Esra	Aysel	Sevgi	Ahmet	Onder	Yilmaz	Cemre
Psychological support	Listening problems				✓				
	Telling thanks	✓	✓						
	Tolerance				✓				
	Smiling face								✓
	Supporting on special days								✓
Physical support	Workplace environment improvement					✓	✓		✓
	Providing material						✓		
Personal development support	Preparing professional development courses						✓	✓	✓
	Getting ideas to teachers						✓		

The Reasons for the Nonfulfillment of Empowerment

The findings obtained as a result of the content analysis regarding why the school principals were not able to make teacher empowerment according to the participants' views are given below in Table 3.

Table 3.

The Reasons for the Nonfulfillment of Empowerment by the Principals

Category	Sub Category	Codes	Teachers				Principals/Assist.			
			Kaan	Esra	Aysel	Sevgi	Ahmet	Onder	Yilmaz	Cemre
Individual	Personal Inadequacy	Not behaving fairly			✓					
		Lack of communication	✓		✓					
		Instability	✓							
		Inability to speak teacher	✓							
		Not being smiling			✓					
		Inability to influence			✓					
		Inability to leadership	✓							
	Administrative Inadequacy	Not participate in decision	✓	✓						
		Professional incompetence	✓	✓						
		Negative school climate	✓							
		Lack of control	✓							
		Lack of expert power			✓					
		Failure to implement an open-door policy			✓					
		Lack of planning			✓					

Organisational	Financial Inadequacy	Delay in the supply of equipment		✓		✓
		Physical environment arrangement		✓		✓
		The difficulty of taking needs			✓	
	Limited Authority	Not have the authority to give awards		✓	✓	✓
		Not have the authority to give permission		✓		
		Prohibition of using additional resources		✓		✓
		The inability of the principal to choose their assistants				✓
		Insufficient training quota				✓

When Table 3 is examined regarding teachers' views that the school principals could not make empowerment, it was noticed that there were two subcategories under individual reasons. These were the subcategories of; the reasons stemming from personal inadequacy and administrative inadequacy. Among the views in the subcategory of reasons due to personal inadequacies, the most frequently repeated teacher view was unfair behaviour and lack of communication, followed by indecision, not being able to influence teachers, not being sympathetic, inability to influence, and inability to lead. Under the subcategory of the reasons stemming from administrative inadequacy, not being involved in decision-making and professional inadequacy were among the most frequently repeated views, followed by negative school climate, lack of supervision, lack of expert power, not implementing an open-door policy, and lack of planning.

Regarding the views of the school principals/assistants regarding the fact that they could not make empowerment, it was noticed that there were two subcategories under the category of organisational reasons. These were the subcategories of; the reasons stemming from financial inadequacy and the reasons stemming from limited authority. Among the views in the subcategory of reasons arising from financial inadequacy, principals' most frequently repeated view was the delay in providing tools and equipment, followed by the design of the physical environment and difficulty in meeting needs. Among the views in the subcategory of reasons arising from a limited authority were the views that the principal did not have the authority to issue a reward certificate, that the principal did not have the authority to give permission to the teacher, and professional incompetence, followed by the fact that the use of additional financial resources was prohibited, that they select their vice principals, and that the quota for in-service training was limited. The views of the participants regarding the reasons why the school principals could not make empowerment are given below:

> He listens to our problems sincerely, but he does not find any solutions. When unsolvable problems grow like a mountain, the school begins to go backwards. The school principal must improve his communication skills and determine the causes of the problems very well. I think that he cannot make empowerment since he doesn't know these issues (Sevgi).

> He doesn't make empowerment. As for the reason, he cannot speak to the teachers. When we talk to him about this, he explains that he acts like that so that the teachers aren't bored and feel free (Kaan).

> It depends on the situation. To empower the teacher, administrators need financial resources first. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to meet the needs of the school and teachers by organising charity sales and collecting donations. It is necessary to reward hardworking teachers. We write officials

10 papers for them to give a certificate of appreciation. Then, the teachers gossip about what they did and get a certificate of appreciation. Some have resentment. Although there are hardworking teachers, there are also those who teach just to spend the day. If you want to empower the teacher, it is necessary to remove "those who just teach" from the system first (Onder).

I cannot fully implement the strategies of empowerment. The teacher wants a printer, but we cannot buy it. We hardly pay the salary of the school attendant and the security staff. Those who appear on TV and say that schools are forbidden to ask for money follow the policies of pushing public schools aside and giving incentives to private schools. In this case, it is wrong to think that we, those who have difficulties providing the tools and equipment that the teachers demand, will act in line with empowering the teachers. We must first solve our basic problems. We can only use intrinsic motivations to empower our teachers, and we can only appreciate them. But how much this situation positively affects them is a matter of question (Yilmaz).

Things to Be Done by the Ministry of National Education

In terms of what the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) should legally do for teacher empowerment, the teachers and school principals were asked, *"What kind of changes do you think the Ministry of National Education should make legally for teacher empowerment? What are your suggestions?"*. According to the participants' views, what the Ministry of National Education should do for the school principals to empower teachers are given below in Table 4.

Table 4.

Suggestions to MoNE

Categories	Codes	Teachers				Principals/Assist.			
		Kaan	Esra	Aysel	Sevgi	Ahmet	Onder	Yilmaz	Cemre
Personal Development	Salary increase		✓	✓					
	Career leader arrangement	✓							
	Increasing the variety of rewards		✓	✓					
	Additional budget for professional training			✓					
	Travel observation activities				✓				
Teacher autonomy	Allowing the use of sourcebooks		✓	✓	✓				
	Curriculum flexibility				✓				
Administrative	Providing administrative training to principals		✓	✓					
	Obligatory teacher opinions in decisions		✓						
	Providing empowerment training to principals			✓					
	Merit in principal choosing		✓						
Increased authority	Allowing the principal to give permission to the teacher						✓	✓	✓
	Authority to give a certificate of thanks and appreciation							✓	✓
	Election of the school administration by the principal						✓		
Law and regulation	Increasing financial resources						✓	✓	✓
	Increase in in-service training quotas						✓		✓

	Application of Teacher performance evaluation system		✓
	Revision of 657		✓
	Flexing the central management	✓	

When Table 4 is examined, in terms of the teachers' views regarding what the Ministry of National Education should do for the school principals to empower teachers, it was noticed that there were three categories: personal development, teacher autonomy, and administrative. Among the views under the category of the suggestions in terms of *personal development*, the most frequently repeated teacher views were paid rise and career steps regulation, followed by the increase in the variety of rewards, additional budget for professional training, and travel-observation activities. Among the views of teacher autonomy proposals, the most frequently repeated teacher opinions were the permission to use reference books and curriculum flexibility. Among the under the category of *administrative* suggestions, the most frequently repeated teacher views were providing administrative training to school principals and making teachers' opinions mandatory in decision-making, followed by providing empowerment training to all school principals and meritocracy in administrator appointments.

In terms of the views of the *principals/assistants* regarding what the Ministry of National Education should do for the school principals to make empowerment, it was noticed that there were namely two categories; increased authority and law and regulation. Among the views under the category of *increased authority*, the most frequently repeated principal view was the ability of the school principal to give permission to the teacher, followed by the authority to give a certificate of appreciation and excellence, and the election of the school administration by the school principal. Among the views under the category of *law and regulation*, the most frequently repeated principals view was the increase in financial resources, followed by the increase in the quota of in-service training, the implementation of a teacher performance evaluation system, the revision of the law numbered 657, and flexing the central administration. The views of the teachers and school principals regarding what the Ministry of Education should do for the school principals to make empowerment are given below:

> *MoNE should be able to operate the performance evaluation system properly. Teachers' career steps should be rearranged. The teacher who develops themselves should be distinguished from the stable teacher (Kaan).*

> *Teachers should be given the autonomy for the activities such as using reference books, sightseeing and observation tours, visiting museums, visiting science houses, etc. The learning environment should be kept away from being stuck in the 4 walls of classrooms (Sevgi).*

> *The rewarding system should be easier to function. There should be rewards other than the Certificate of Appreciation and Certificate of Excellence. It should be easier to get permission. While the school principal appears as the institution's chief, they do not even have the authority to give permission (Cemre).*

> *Because of the central management of the education system, administrators stand by with folded arms. No matter what activity we will do, we are stuck due to financial insufficiency. Our vice-principals help us, but if we have the flexibility to set up the team we wish to work with and can work in harmony with, it would be really nice (Onder).*

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The study was conducted to reveal the empowerment strategies that school principals should implement and the difficulties they face while implementing the empowerment strategies. According to the research results, the empowerment strategies that school principals should implement were collected under the headings of providing physical and psychological support to teachers, communicating effectively, making teachers participate in decisions about the functioning of the school, and providing teachers autonomy while performing their profession. For teachers to fulfil their duties effectively and feel that they belong to the institution, they need support from their school principals (Yunus et al., 2021). Similar results were found in studies on empowerment in various fields. For example, Cavus' (2006) research shows that empowerment affects organisational success. In the research of Cetin and Kiral (2018), participants used communication, feedback, reward, support, appreciation, observing needs, creating a team spirit, taking responsibility, and delegating authority for the concept of empowerment. Giderler (2015) identified them as employees' organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance improvement through empowerment. Wilcoxen et al. (2019)'s study shows that empowerment enables development, progress, and collaboration.

According to the research results, most of the teachers stated that they were aware of their importance for the school. They did not have any autonomy while performing their profession, and they could not participate in the decisions at school sufficiently. Teacher autonomy is a versatile and complex phenomenon since it depends on the different structural features of countries' education systems, the general conditions of schools, and teachers' personal characteristics (Celik & Atik, 2020). The subjects and the level of teacher autonomy may differ according to the countries. In the educational reforms carried out in Turkey, there were few efforts considering teachers' views regarding educational and instructional activities, improving their area of movement, and participating in the decisions. Teachers should be included in the education system as practitioners and decision-makers (Ozturk, 2011). It can also be thought that negative situations may arise considering the impact of teachers' characteristics on teacher autonomy within schools. Determining the limits of autonomy and putting this case into action on a legal basis may minimise possible problems.

For teachers to reach the determined organisational goals and raise qualified and modern generations, they must perform their profession affectionately by indigenising it and getting job satisfaction (Kauts & Kaur, 2020). In many studies (Babaoglan & Yilmaz, 2012; Demirtas & Alanoglu 2015; Thekedam, 2010; Yin, 2018, etc.), it was found that the job satisfaction of teachers who were asked for their opinions in the process of making administrative decisions and who participated in the decision-making process increased, and in this case, the decisions made could be implemented more easily, and the educational and teaching activities could function more effectively. Therefore, to increase the education systems effectiveness, asking teachers' opinions and benefiting

from their expertise can positively contribute to the increase in the quality of the interaction within the organisation and the sincerity of the teachers while working.

Demirtas and Kucuk (2014)'s studies conducted on the reasons affecting the performance of school principals revealed that such factors as the professional knowledge and personal characteristics of school principals, school culture, effective physical conditions, etc., increased the performance of school principals. In contrast, such factors as limited budget, frequent legislation changes, and the problems caused by staff, etc., decreased school principals' performance, which is similar to the findings of this study. It was also noted that the reasons attributed to personal inadequacies and the reasons attributed to administrative inadequacies were the reasons school principals were unable to empower teachers. In contrast, the reasons attributed to financial inadequacies and the reasons attributed to limited authority were the reasons school principals were unable to empower teachers. It was also concluded that the reasons stemming from personal inadequacy and administrative inadequacy were why school principals could not empower teachers (according to the teachers' views). In contrast, the reasons stemming from financial insufficiency and limited authority were why they could not empower (according to the principals' views).

In conclusion, the school principals could not empower due to financial insufficiency is quite significant. The school should have sufficient financial and human resources to ensure that the effectiveness and efficiency of educational services are sustainable and educational outputs exhibit the desired qualifications (Karakutuk, 2006). However, it can also be noted that how the financial resources allocated for education will be provided differs according to the countries' political philosophy, management style, and educational administration structure.

According to the research findings, principals indicated that they could not implement or provide reinforcement strategies that require financial resources, such as physical facilities and equipment needed by teachers, in the desired time due to financial inadequacies. Similar results were obtained in the study conducted by Cetin and Kiral (2018). In this regard, it can be suggested to increase the financial resources allocated by the state for education, transfer some of the taxes used by local governments to education, and ask for support from the businesses in the neighbourhood where the school is located.

Indeed, according to this research, the school principals indicated that they could not implement the empowerment strategies requiring financial resources such as physical needs of teachers, tools, equipment, etc., or provide them in the desired time due to financial insufficiency. In this regard, it can be suggested that the financial resources allocated by the state for education can be increased, some of the taxes used by local governments can be transferred to use compulsorily for education, support from the businesses in the neighbourhood where the school is located can be requested. The families can be persuaded to allocate a small amount of the budget they pay for study centres to the schools where they will receive these services.

One of the teachers' views on the changes that the Ministry of National Education should make for teacher empowerment was that the school principals could not make

empowerment since they did not receive any administration training. The countries that have developed their education system in this regard attach importance to the selection and training of school principals to provide effective learning in education and social functions of schools, creating a positive school climate, etc. In Turkey, the issue of training and appointing school principals has been a long-running topic of discussion for many years (Memduhoglu, 2007). School principals must be able to use the human and material resources of the organisation efficiently to ensure the proper functioning of educational organisations following their goals (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The school principals can achieve this effectiveness as long as they know the school administration theories and processes well and can implement them when necessary (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). It is a compulsory situation for school principals to have an academic education in this field to establish a connection between theory and practice in the problems experienced (Bursalioglu, 2008). By signing an agreement between the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education regarding this situation, the number of Educational Administration Departments in distance education and evening class programs may be increased, and school principals may be obliged to receive this training. In this way, it can be ensured that all school principals have the theoretical knowledge of school administration.

Another result of what the Ministry of National Education should do was that school principals should choose their vice-principals. The procedures for giving a certificate of appreciation should be simplified, and the job guarantee provided by the law numbered 657 should be limited. There is a strong relationship between teachers' professional motivation, school commitment, and job satisfaction (B. Kiral, 2020; Mooij, 2008; Schultheiss, 2008). For this reason, the teachers whose personal rights are restricted cannot be expected to perform their profession affectionately and feel motivated. In this regard, instead of limiting the job guarantees of teachers, as the majority of the school principals suggested, it can be recommended to establish a scientific performance evaluation system and encourage successful teachers. Therefore, by using one of the empowerment strategies, successful teachers will be distinguished from other teachers and supported.

The questions of this research can be implemented in public and private schools, and the results can be compared. This study, carried out with primary school principals, can be applied to different school levels. Furthermore, in the subsequent studies, the administrators in Higher Education Institutions may be selected as the study group. The empowerment strategies implemented to the academic or administrative staff can be investigated, and comparisons can be made.

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