

Examination of School Managers' Opinions on Localization in Education

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In this study, it is aimed to examine the opinions of school principals about decentralization in school administrations. The research is in the qualitative research method. In the research, the phenomenology model of qualitative research was used. The study group was selected by purposive sampling method and consists of six school principals experienced in school management. Data were obtained through interview and analyzed by content analysis. According to the results of the research, school principals experience various problems in management, the main ones being pressure from the supervisor, financial inadequacies, personnel shortages and clumsiness and slowness caused by the bureaucratic structure. These problems experienced by school principals are closely related to localization and result from the fact that schools are managed with a centralized structure. School principals believe that decentralization in education is necessary. They think that decentralization in school management will save public money, get rid of the excessive workload of the central government, increase success and efficiency in education, and help ensure adocracy and peace in schools and society. While decentralization has benefits, it can cause some inequalities and negativities. It is recommended to create the necessary environment for this and to make legal and structural preparations.

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INTRODUCTION

Every organization, whether it is a public institution or a business, needs an effective and efficient management to ensure sustainability in line with its goals. The most important issue in this management is making decisions and determining the implementation procedures. In central organizations and operations, this decision-making mechanism and initiative authority is concentrated in the center. All system organs in the province are managed by a single centre. The difficulties experienced by this management approach in reaching everywhere cause various problems due to delays, ignorance of the difficulties and troubles in the field. The cumbersome structures of public institutions, overemployment, poor distribution of authority and responsibility, and obstacles such as bureaucratic mentality can come to the point of blocking the functioning and developments in the system, let alone paving the way for the execution of services (Bray, 1991). As long as the centralized and cumbersome structure in institutions cannot be ended and strong local governments cannot be established, these problems may continue to increase. In that respect, decentralization seems to be a phenomenon that should be put into practice in public institutions, especially in schools, without wasting time. The main pitfalls and problems of centralized education service delivery in one country have been experienced. In this sense, the theoretical advantages of decentralization on issues such as decision-making, administrative and financial inadequacy, and poor quality and access to services have become extremely attractive. The form of administration, which envisages the execution of decisions and services in the public sector from a single center, in a hierarchically manner, is called central administration (KAYA Report, 1992). Currently, there is a decentralized global trend in education systems. Most countries are experimenting with or considering some form of educational decentralization. The process is carried out by transferring decision-making powers from central Ministries of Education to interim governments, local governments, communities and schools. While there are solid theoretical justifications for decentralizing education systems, the process requires strong political commitment and leadership to be successful. The path, depth and eventual outcome of decentralization reforms in education in a country depend on the motivations of the reforms and the initial country and sector conditions (Hanson, 1997; Edwards Jr and De Matthews, 2014).

Localization in education is a research topic that has attracted a lot of attention in recent years. Who should make decisions about education and schools, who should pay the price, how resources can be used more effectively are the issues that localization research seeks to answer (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). It is an

extremely impossible task to manage a country or a particular service entirely from one centre. For this reason, the practices of organizing, developing and ensuring the effectiveness of public services under the responsibility of the state are carried out through local government institutions such as central government institutions and provincial and district directorates. Decentralization can be defined as the administration of public services to autonomous public law legal entities separate from the central government (Tortop, 1990). There are many reasons for the need for decentralization in education. The problem of increasing efficiency in management and governance, the slow and slow progress of the state bureaucracy, the problems experienced in the selection of teachers and teacher payments, the purchase and distribution of the tools, materials or maintenance needed by the schools, and the need to equip the buildings are among these reasons. In many countries, decentralization in education can be a way to solve these problems (McGinn and Welsh, 1999).

According to Dinler (1994), he emphasized that a management approach in which all decisions are made from the center will gradually move away from the people and many problems will arise. Bursalıoğlu (2012) stated that upright models in educational organizations are designed according to centralized management and it is inevitable that communication and coordination problems are inevitable in this type of structuring. He also stated that the focal point of a centrally managed vertical administration is not the task but the form, and that the operation of different systems for each of the applications such as plan, program, research, and evaluation makes the organization larger, cumbersome and causes conflicts of authority. Overall, the decentralization process can significantly improve the efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of service delivery compared to centralized systems. The provision of decentralized education promises to be more efficient, better reflect local priorities, encourage participation, and ultimately improve coverage and quality. In particular, governments with severe fiscal constraints are tempted by the potential for decentralization to increase efficiency. While a decentralized administration offers advantages such as being more efficient in education and better reflecting local priorities, it also encourages the participation of all stakeholders in the school and improves learning outcomes and teaching quality. In addition, governments that are in serious financial difficulties find decentralization in education very attractive in order to increase spending efficiency and get rid of many burdens (Sherman, 2016).

Decentralization in education improves monitoring and evaluation by reducing absenteeism. In addition, it increases the energy and motivation levels of local actors and ensures that they are reflected in the school and increases the quality of educational services. (cited in UNDP, 2003, Kameshwara et al., 2020). Proponents of decentralization in education base their arguments in favor of the school due to increased autonomy and the participation of various local actors in decision-making processes, thus giving them more say and responsibility and, in a way, supporting its governance (Gamage, 2005). Since decentralization encourages increased local participation in school management, it also improves accountability and responsiveness to student needs at the same rate. It also helps better use of resources. The gap between government officials and schools is allegedly too great to make quick and informed decisions. A close circle and school partnerships can improve learning both in the classroom and at home (Sherman, 2016).

Considering all these evaluations, it is seen that decentralization in schools is an extremely important issue both in terms of the goals and functionality of the school and in terms of relieving the central government of certain burdens and responsibilities. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that there are many studies on decentralization in education. (Taşçı, 2008; Kurt, 2006; Yıldız, 2005; Arslan and Atasayar, 2008; Kaynak, 2014; Bozan, 2002; İlimoğlu, 2014; Kiran, 2001; Yavuz, 2001; Şişman and Turan, 2003; Özdemir, 2008; Uzun, 2015; Göksoy, 2016; Bilgiç 2021). In these studies, studies examining the opinions of school principals, who are the most authoritative names of schools in the provinces and who have the most problems in this regard, on decentralization in education are quite insufficient. Determining the problems faced by school principals in administration and determining their readiness and thoughts about decentralization in education can provide important data to practitioners and decision makers, and in the light of these data, decentralization studies in education can progress more effectively and quickly. In this context, in this study, it is aimed to examine the views of school principals on decentralization in school administrations. In line with this general purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

- 1) What are the problems faced by school principals in administration?
- 2) How do school principals think about decentralization in education and school management?

RESEARCH METHOD

This section contains information about the study model, study group, data collection tools, application, validity, reliability, and data analysis.

Model of the Research

This study, which aims to examine the views of school principals on decentralization in school administrations, was designed in qualitative research method. This study is a phenomenological study from qualitative research models. The purpose of phenomenology is to understand human thoughts and experiences (van Manen, 2007, p.12). Phenomenology, which aims to understand human experiences, is a qualitative research method that provides an in-depth examination of people's understanding, feelings, perspectives and perceptions of a particular phenomenon or concept (Rose, Beeby and Parker).

Study Group

The research group of this study, which is a phenomenological qualitative research, consists of six school principals working in schools in the center of Erzurum in the 2020-2021 academic year, selected by purposive sampling method. Purposeful sampling is the selection of information-rich situations in the context of the purpose of the study in order to conduct in-depth research (Büyüköztürk, 2012). In this context, school principals who are believed to have professional experience and knowledge about localization were selected as the study group in the research. All of the participants are male managers. 1 of the participants is single and 5 is married. The seniority of the participants in management ranges from 4 years to 28 years. Three of the participants are working as principals in primary schools. 2 of them are working as principals in secondary schools and 1 in high school. The ages of the participants ranged from 34 to 58. Participants were coded as M1, M2, M3... for data analysis.

Data collection tool

The data related to the research were obtained through interviews. A semi-structured interview form was used in the interviews. The interview forms used in the research were created after the relevant literature review and were finalized by taking the opinions of two experts in the field of educational sciences. In order to collect data, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participant in April and May of the 2021-2022 academic year by the researcher. An appointment was made with the school principals for the interviews and they were held at their schools. Before the meeting, information was given about the study and localization, and the participants were given comforting and reassuring speeches. No recording device was used during the interviews, upon the request of the participants. The views of the participants were recorded by the researcher. The interviews lasted between 25 and 35 minutes.

Analysis of Data

Content analysis was used to analyze the research data. Content analysis is a form of analysis that includes the process of coding research data and creating categories and themes from these codes. (Yıldırım & Simsek, 2013). In this context, the data obtained in this study were primarily coded. After these codes, the ones related to each other were grouped and in the last stage, themes were created based on the theoretical literature and related codes were combined under the same theme.

Information on the Credibility, Transferability, Reliability and Confirmability of the Research

The validity and reliability of the study in a qualitative research; credibility is provided by the concepts of transferability and confirmability (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). In order to increase the credibility of this research, the findings, comments and results were shared with the participants and their confirmations were obtained. In order to ensure transferability in the study, the research sample was tried to be defined in detail. In addition, all stages of the research were explained clearly, clearly and intelligibly. At the same time, before the interview, the participants were chatted to build trust and get to know each other (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). One way to ensure reliability in a qualitative research is consistency between data coding (Creswell, 2016). For this, the codes and themes created from the data were sent to two more experts in the field of educational sciences and it was seen that the coding was largely compatible. According to all these evaluations, it can be said that the study provides a sufficient level of reliability

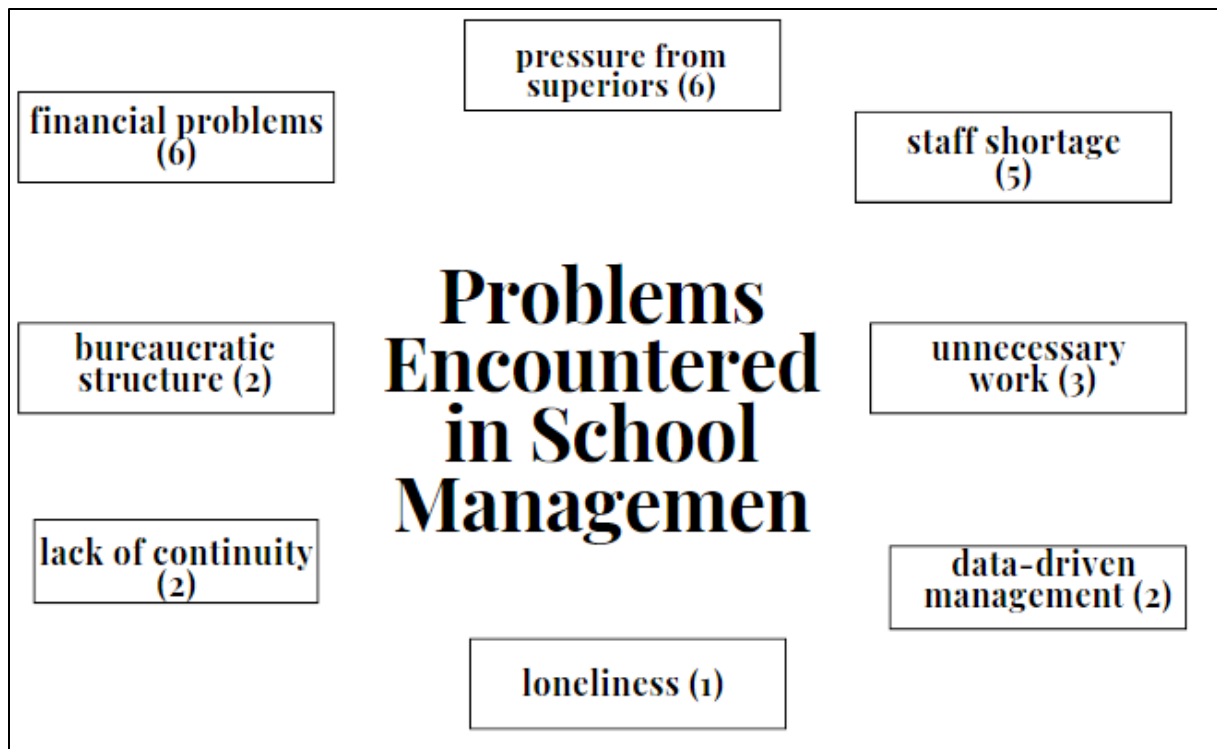
FINDINGS

The data obtained within the scope of the research were gathered under two themes: problems encountered in school management and localization in school management. These themes and related codes are presented below.

Findings Regarding the Problems Encountered in School Management

In the research, "What are the problems you encounter in school management?" Findings related to the first problem question formed in the form of the following are as follows.

Figure 1: Problems Encountered In School Management



When Figure 1 is examined, according to school principals, the most important problem they face in administration is pressure from superiors and superiors (6). One of the biggest problems in school administrations is the financial problems that schools experience (6). According to school principals, the shortage of personnel in schools is another important problem experienced in management. According to school principals, other problems experienced in management are unnecessary workload (3), bureaucratic vertical hierarchy (2), lack of continuity (2), data-based management (2) and loneliness (1). Some of the participant's views on this theme are as follows;

"The most important problem in schools is the endless demands and pressures of superiors. They give instructions and guide us on everything from student registration to invoices. But they don't ask how things work at school, whether there are enough staff. Not having enough money in schools creates a problem in meeting urgent needs" (M5)

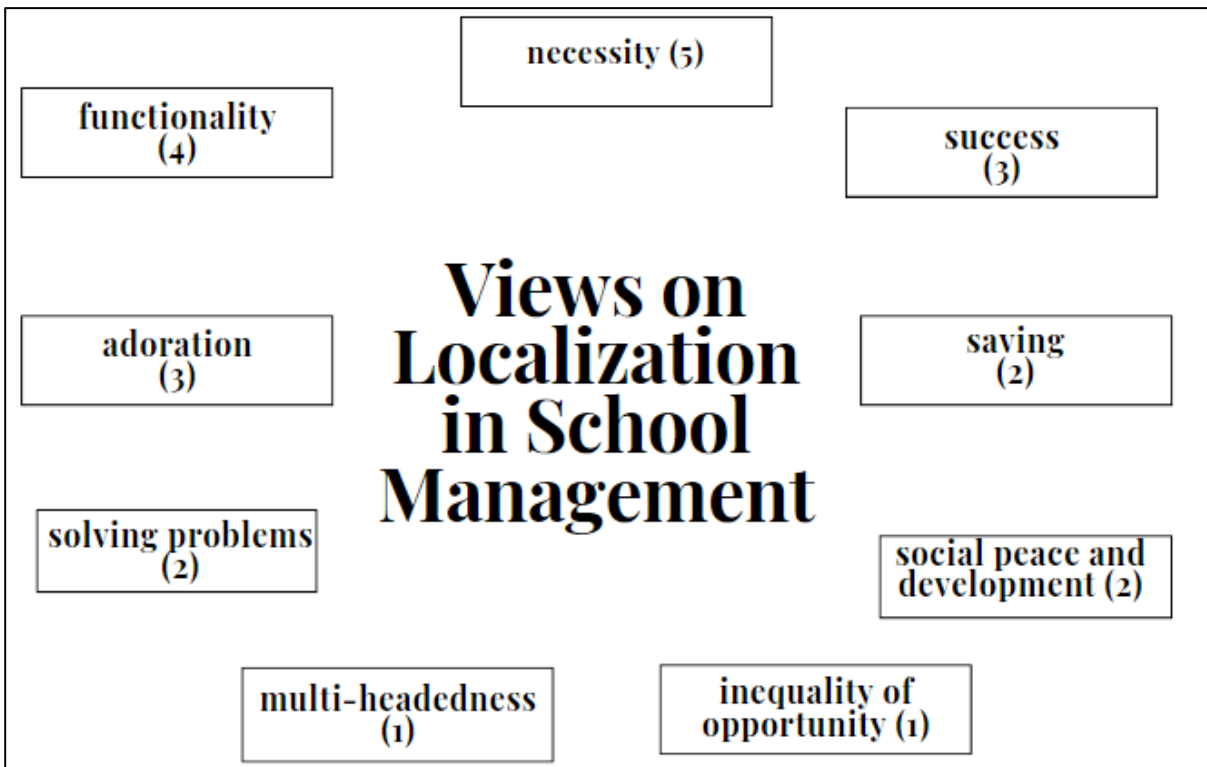
"Absolutely financial difficulties. Lack of money is the biggest problem in management. The expectations and wishes of the superiors are another problem. I think most paperwork done in schools is useless and showy. In particular, it is quite wrong to look for this success in numerical data. The lack of adequate cleaning personnel in our school is also an important problem" (M1)

"School principals are lonely people, they can neither benefit teachers nor get rid of overpressure. You either do what your superiors want or you will have problems. Other problems in school administrations are financial problems, lack of sufficient staff, inconsistency and lack of continuity in practices" (M3)

Findings on Localization in School Management

In the research, “What are your views on the phenomenon of decentralization in school management?” Findings related to the second sub-problem question formed in the form of the following are as follows.

Figure 2: Views On Decentralization In School Management



When the school principals' views on decentralization in administration are examined, the prominent view is that decentralization is necessary (5). School principals think that decentralization will increase the functionality of schools (4). According to the principals, while decentralization in school management increases the success at school (3), on the other hand, it strengthens the adocracy in the school (3). Other positive codes created in this theme are solving problems (2), social peace and development (2), saving (2). In addition to the positive opinions of school principals, there are also negative opinions about localization. These are inequality of opportunity (1) and multi-headedness and disorder (1). Some of the participant views on this theme are as follows;

“I believe in localization in schools and I think it is necessary. I think decentralization in administration will reduce the cumbersomeness in schools and increase efficiency and speed. While taking decisions at school, we are obligatory waiting for the approval of the superiors and the center. Success is achieved if each school manages its own money and chooses its own staff.” (M2)

“Schools are not businesses. Therefore, more authority and initiative should be given. I think decentralization will also reduce the burden of the center and save money. It is impossible for the school in the village of Erzurum to be managed within the four walls of Ankara. Problems in schools should be solved on the spot. In this way, not only the schools but also the society will be happy because the problems are better known on the spot.” (M4)

“I think decentralization poses a problem to the unitary structure of the state. The possibility of a rich school in a big city and the possibility of a village school cannot be the same. Leaving the village school alone creates inequality of opportunity. Also, there is unity in education right now. At the end of localization, a sound may come out of each head and there may be a disorder.” (M6)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the results of this study, which aims not to examine the views of school principals on decentralization in school management, school principals experience problems in different subjects in

administration. The most important problem faced by school principals is the pressure from their superiors. School principals, who submit to pressures from superiors due to the hierarchical structure, have difficulties in this regard. Another important problem experienced in school administrations is financial impossibilities. The fact that schools do not have their own budget and money causes difficulties in meeting routine or unexpected needs. Schools can only receive funding from the center for very small amounts and cleaning aid. This causes problems in the course of the functioning of the school. Another important problem experienced in school administrations is the shortage of personnel. The fact that the schools cannot recruit personnel because they do not have their own budgets or that the personnel provided by the provincial and district directorates are at the initiative of the center causes problems. This means that there are not enough and qualified personnel in schools. This is a problem that hinders the functioning of the school and the achievement of its goals. Due to the decisions taken by the center and the applications and documents requested by the provincial and district directorates, unnecessary workloads are experienced in schools. This can cause inefficiency, clumsiness and slowdown.

According to the results of the research, other major problems experienced in schools are bureaucratic hierarchical organizational structure, lack of continuity in practices and decisions, data-based management approach and loneliness. The fact that school principals think that practices and decisions are constantly changing and that there is no continuity can be interpreted as the education system has turned into a jigsaw puzzle. Even in the change of not only the central governments but also the ministers and bureaucrats, changing the decisions and practices of the old administrations completely can reduce the efficiency and effectiveness in schools and cause problems. In addition, the evaluation of success in education only with quantitative data and the execution of each application based on numerical data can cause problems in schools whose mission is to glorify the human spirit. When all these problems experienced by school principals in schools are examined, it can be said that the majority of them are caused by the administration from a distant center, the bureaucratic structure and the inability of the schools to manage themselves. In other words, it can be said that the basis of these problems is the lack of decentralization in school administrations and the absence of localization elements. According to Bursalıoğlu (2012), school administrators have to deal with many different and time-consuming tasks at schools rather than educational ones.

Similar to the results of the study, as a result of his study in 2019 in which he examined the problems of school principals in administration, Çetin (2019) concluded that principals mostly experience problems in financial and administrative activities. Arslanargun and Bozkurt (2012) concluded in their study that school principals give priority to legal responsibilities over professional and moral responsibilities, and that they try to fulfill their management duties with the limited resources at hand and found that these cause structural and hardware problems. These results show that school administrations are not free and comfortable in terms of resources and opportunities. Karatürk and Özbal (2019) found that school administrators mostly experience problems such as structural and hierarchical problems, legal regulations (legislation), curriculum issues, frequent changes in the exam system, instability, and lack of planning. Studies in the literature show that school administrations mostly experience problems in administrative issues such as financial inadequacy, personnel inadequacy and employment, repair and maintenance works, which support the results of the study (Demir, 2016; Demirtaş and Özer, 2014; Hoşgörür and Arslan, 2014; Özer et al., 2015). ; Sarice, 2006). Demirtaş and Özer (2014) emphasized that since schools do not have their own budget and authority, they meet their financial needs by collecting money for school-parent unions, and this can cause various complaints, insecurity and negativities. This can be interpreted as localization in schools and opening the way for each school to create its own budget can eliminate these problems. Bayar, (2016), Çakır and Özelmacı, (2017) and Demir-Yıldız (2018) found in their study that school principals generally experience parent and student-related problems rather than administrative problems in schools.

Another result reached in the research is that school principals generally have very positive thoughts towards decentralization in school administrations. School principals think that decentralization is now a necessity in schools and they think that if localization is achieved, functionality and success in schools will increase. According to the results of the research, while localization strengthens the adocracy in schools, on the other hand, it can remove many burdens from the central administration and provide speed and savings in education. In this way, the level of peace and welfare can increase not only in schools but also in society. According to the results of the research, there are also school principals who believe that localization of the

administration will lead to negative results. According to school principals, this can make a big difference in terms of financial and equal opportunities between centralized schools and village schools that are left alone and have limited opportunities. In addition, the fact that each school goes to separate programs and practices may cause multi-headedness and disorder in education. In this context, while mentioning the benefits of decentralization, these dangers should not be ignored. Similar to these results, İlimoğlu concluded that, as a result of the thesis study he conducted in 2014, the participants were positive and willing to localize, but there were also some drawbacks and uneasiness.

Similar to the results of the study, Kaynak (2014) concluded that decentralization in education is feasible and necessary as a result of his study on school administrators and teachers. Görgülü (2019) emphasizes that localization in education will have many advantages for Turkey and it will be applicable. Topaloğlu (2012), in his study, reached the findings that delegating authority in education to the local can cause problems in issues such as the selection and appointment of teachers and the follow-up of personal rights. In a study in which the results of the study were supported, Bilgi (2021) reached the conclusions that localization in education can increase success, peace and welfare in societies in his study in which he examined globalization and success. Mankoe & Maynes (1999) emphasize that decentralization in education will increase the quality of education. According to Erdoğan (2004), decentralization in education will increase the success of decentralization in the direction of allocating more local resources to schools, increasing competition and educational services. Ölmez and Tombul (2012) emphasized that a suitable environment for decentralization in education and preparations should be made for this, and stated that there is still no ready environment for decentralization in Turkey. Similarly, Hazman and Küçükilhan (2018) found that there are some problems and deficiencies in decentralization in education that can be eliminated with planning, structure and legal regulations.

As a result, school principals may experience problems arising from many and different reasons in the management of schools. The main of these problems are financial problems, insufficient resources, problems in personnel and worker employment, problems originating in the hierarchical structure such as overpressure, and clumsiness and slowness in implementation and decisions due to unnecessary work in management. These problems are closely related to the way schools are managed, and localization in school administrations can provide an environment for solving these problems. In order to increase the quality and functionality in education, it is necessary to transfer the authority and decisions in schools to local elements. However, while doing this, problems such as inequality of opportunity brought by localization and incompatibility and disorder in education should be taken into consideration. School principals seem willing and ready for localization.

SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As a result of this study, it is recommended to make legal arrangements with the necessary infrastructure. Deepening localization may fail without making these arrangements and eliminating its drawbacks. After the necessary legal arrangements have been made, it is recommended that local administrators be given the authority in decision-making, budget creation and personnel employment. However, it is suggested that the main issues and the general framework be arranged by the central organization in a way that does not disrupt the integrity of the state in the program and curriculum. In addition, it is suggested that school administrators should be trained on decentralization and should be developed to become more competent in management. The collection of the study with qualitative data is one of the limitations of this study. The subject can be examined with quantitative and mixed studies on the subject. In this study, examining the topic of localization only in line with the opinions of school principals is another limitation of this research. The relationship between localization and different variables can be examined. Another limitation of the study is that the study was conducted in Erzurum sample and only with school principals.

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