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Okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarına
yönelik görüşleri ve çözüm önerileri

School principals' perspectives on professional
development needs and proposed solutions

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ÖZ

Bu betimsel nitel araştırmanın amacı, okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını incelemektir. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden maksimum çeşitlilik ve kolayda örnekleme teknikleri kullanılarak Giresun'daki farklı kamu okullarında görev yapan on iki okul müdürü oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmış ve tematik analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları; okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarının yönetim işlevleri ve bireysel yetkinlikler olmak üzere iki temel tema altında toplandığını göstermektedir. Yönetim işlevleri kapsamında, etkili ve bilinçli karar verme, paydaşları karar alma süreçlerine dahil etme, iletişim becerileri (özellikle öfke kontrolü ve akılcı tepki stratejileri), liderlik, stratejik rehberlik, koordinasyon ve denetim becerilerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik ihtiyaçlar öne çıkmıştır. Bireysel yetkinlikler bağlamında teknolojik becerilerin artırılması ve yabancı dil yeterliliğinin geliştirilmesi önemli mesleki gelişim alanları olarak belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, kıdemi daha yüksek olan okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını daha sınırlı düzeyde algıladıkları saptanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, araştırma okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişiminin etkili liderlik sergilemeleri, öğretmenleri desteklemeleri ve öğrenci başarısını artırmaları açısından önemli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, sürekli ihtiyaç analizlerine dayalı, hedefe yönelik ve bağlama duyarlı mesleki gelişim programlarının tasarlanmasını önermekte; yaşam boyu öğrenmeyi benimseyen okul liderlerinin desteklenmesi ve teşvik edilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: liderlik, mesleki gelişim, okul müdürü, yönetim

ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative study aimed to examine the professional development needs of school principals working in public schools. Purposeful sampling techniques, including maximum variation and convenience sampling, were used to select twelve principals from public schools in Giresun. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that school principals' professional development needs clustered around two main themes: management functions and individual competencies. In terms of management functions, participants emphasized the need to enhance effective and informed decision-making, involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, improve communication skills (particularly anger management and rational response strategies), strengthen leadership and strategic guidance capacities, and develop coordination and supervision skills. Regarding individual competencies, improving technological skills and foreign language proficiency were identified as key areas for professional growth. It was also observed that more experienced principals perceived their professional development needs as less pressing compared to their less-experienced counterparts. In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of professional development in enabling school principals to demonstrate effective leadership, support teachers, and enhance student achievement. The findings suggest designing targeted, context-sensitive professional development programs based on continuous needs analysis and underscore the importance of supporting and recognizing school leaders who model lifelong learning.

Keywords: leadership, professional development, school principal, management

INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid change, school principals play a significant role in shaping future generations by equipping them with the skills and competencies required for the 21st century. Boren et al. (2017) argue that school leaders must be lifelong learners to effectively respond to the evolving challenges of their dynamic environments. Meeting the demands of modern education systems requires school principals to possess a blend of knowledge, practical skills, and professional dispositions, all of which must be nurtured through ongoing development (Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009). These growing expectations have significantly expanded the scope and complexity of the school principal's role.

School principals must balance administrative responsibilities with broader strategic goals. Their daily managerial tasks-such as decision-making, planning, organizing, coordinating, and supervising-constitute the bureaucratic functioning of the school (Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2009). At the same time, effective leadership requires the ability to intentionally influence organizational activities and relationships (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Principals also serve as human resource managers who support teachers and staff through effective resource allocation, training, and professional support, which are critical for improving teaching and learning and enhancing student outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005). When schools fail to achieve expected learning outcomes, this situation is often attributed to limited leadership capacity or insufficient professional preparation (Mathibe, 2007). These failures call for professional support mechanisms for continuous learning.

Given the multifaceted nature of school leadership, continuous professional development has become essential. As the role of school leadership expands, professional development has become a cornerstone in the process of professionalizing educational leadership (Bøje & Frederiksen, 2019). Kızılkant (2011) defines professional development as the ongoing improvement and renewal of the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to perform a profession effectively. Within the educational context, professional development involves continuous adaptation to new instructional methods, research findings, and evolving educational goals. Moreover, it promotes collaboration and the exchange of expertise among educators, academics, and industry professionals (Kış, 2011).

Beyond formal training structures, how principals learn is equally important. Sahlin (2025) emphasizes that interactions with professional peers offer one of the most effective and relevant forms of professional learning for experienced principals. Such peer-based learning supports the co-construction of knowledge, the validation of leadership practices, and the development of shared meaning, all of which contribute to leadership growth. Therefore, school principals must engage in continuous professional learning to meet the complex demands of modern schooling and better address the needs of students and teachers alike (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2020).

Despite the benefits of collaborative learning, the demands of school leadership continue to place significant pressure on principals. In addition to pedagogical expertise, school principals must develop competencies in several key areas of school management, including decision-making, planning, organization, communication, supervision, evaluation, budgeting, and human resources management. Structured and well-designed professional development initiatives are vital for addressing gaps in these areas and equipping principals to improve school performance (Zepeda et al., 2014). According to Daresh and Male (2000; as cited in Osman & Günbey, 2024), many principals experience feelings of alienation, isolation, and frustration. Additionally, Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 key responsibilities that are critical to a principal's effectiveness, encompassing areas such as communication, time management, and more.

These leadership challenges are particularly salient within the Turkish education system. In Türkiye, despite the absence of formal pre-service training for school principals, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) provides in-service professional development opportunities. At the national level, the MoNE organizes training programs on various topics; however, participation is limited due to resource constraints. At the local level, Provincial Directorates of National

Education are authorized to organize training activities tailored to regional needs. While national in-service training programs are centrally managed by the Directorate of In-Service Training, local initiatives are planned annually and implemented at the provincial level.

Within this policy context, research conducted within the Turkish context has already explored school principals' perspectives on their professional development needs. Polat et al. (2018) identified key areas where principals sought further development, including knowledge of management practices, personal development, technical competencies, and school-community relations. The study also highlighted a preference for formal professional development activities such as courses and workshops; however, principals perceived peer-related practices—such as guiding, observing, and training colleagues—as the most effective forms of professional learning. Similarly, Kasalak (2020) reported that school administrators identified critical areas of need in professional development, including occupational health and safety, effective communication skills, proficiency in the use of information technologies in education, and strategies for managing student discipline and behavioural issues. Furthermore, Bozkurt (2023) found that schools benefitted from professional development initiatives by enhancing managerial competencies, fostering a positive school climate, and improving organizational communication.

Despite these contributions, the existing literature leaves several important questions unanswered. Although previous studies in Türkiye have identified school principals' professional development needs and focused on the benefits of professional learning, important gaps remain. Existing research has primarily focused on identifying general areas of need or evaluating professional development outcomes, with limited attention to principals' own suggestions for ensuring the quality and sustainability of professional development. In addition, principals' perspectives across different career stages have not been sufficiently explored. To address these gaps, the present study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to examine public school principals' professional development needs and their recommendations for improving and sustaining professional learning opportunities.

Addressing these gaps is critical, given the well-documented influence of school leadership on school improvement. A substantial body of research emphasises the strong correlation between school leadership and school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2010; Murphy et al., 2007; Bush, 2007). Recent studies have expanded this understanding by highlighting the importance of balancing academic achievement with the social-emotional development of both students and staff within supportive school environments (Arastaman et al., 2023). Additionally, leadership styles have been shown to play a pivotal role in fostering positive school climates (Eranil & Özbilen, 2017). As schools face increasing challenges and expectations, effective leadership becomes essential to ensure that students achieve both their academic and personal development goals (Leithwood et al., 2017; Huber & Muijs, 2010; Pont and Moorman, 2008). This growing body of evidence reinforces the critical role school leaders play in improving school quality and highlights the necessity of their continuous professional development (Sahlin, 2025). In this regard, investing in the professional growth and training of school principals is essential for sustaining school success.

In this context, understanding how school principals perceive their own professional development needs becomes especially important. According to contemporary educational management principles, school principals must be actively engaged in their own continuous learning. By doing so, they contribute to the overall quality of educational services, promote institutional capacity, and serve as role models for modern educational leadership. Achieving these outcomes requires that principals possess up-to-date knowledge and leadership skills. Reaching the highest level of professional competence not only supports their career advancement but also enhances motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness. This research addresses this gap by providing a deeper understanding of school principals' perspectives on their professional development needs, with particular attention to how these needs align with their management roles and the evolving demands of the Turkish educational system.

This study focuses on school principals in Türkiye and investigates their views on professional development needs. It aims to contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable professional development programs by identifying the professional growth needs of school leaders. In this context, the research problem is to determine the development areas in which school principals working in public primary and secondary schools require professional development. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the views of school principals regarding their professional development needs (decision-making, planning, organizing, leadership, communication, coordination, supervising)?
2. What are the suggestions of school principals for ensuring the quality of their professional development?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative study design to explore the views of school principals on their professional development needs. Qualitative methods, which analyse data from sources such as interviews and observations, help uncover participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Patton, 2002). A descriptive approach to a qualitative study allows researchers to explore and gain insights into their experiences based on their own opinions (Tisdell & Merriam, 2025). This approach was chosen for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of school principals' experiences, opinions, and professional development needs. This method emphasizes describing participants' perspectives in their own words rather than testing hypotheses or developing theory. Given that previous research in Türkiye has largely focused on identifying general areas of professional development need, a descriptive approach provides the flexibility to capture the nuanced views and suggestions of principals at different career stages.

Study Group

The study group consisted of 12 school principals working in different types of public schools in Giresun, Türkiye. A combination of purposive sampling methods was used to select participants. Maximum variation sampling ensured representation of principals from diverse school types and at various career stages, providing a broad perspective on professional development needs. Convenience sampling was applied for practical reasons, as the first author, serving as an assistant principal, could readily invite colleagues who were willing and available to participate in interviews. This approach facilitated timely data collection while still capturing diverse experiences. To protect participants' confidentiality, codes such as SP1, SP2, and so on were used instead of real names. Table 1 presents detailed information about the study group.

Table 1*Demographics of the Study Group*

Participant	Gender	School type	Level of education	Seniority	Years of experience in management
SP1	Male	Secondary	Master's degree	24	23
SP2	Female	Primary	Master's degree	18	16
SP3	Male	Secondary	Master's degree	26	16
SP4	Male	Secondary	Master's degree	33	24
SP5	Male	Secondary	Bachelor's Degree	41	37
SP6	Male	Primary	Master's degree	29	23
SP7	Male	Primary	Bachelor's Degree	16	7
SP8	Male	High school	Master's degree	19	8
SP9	Male	Secondary	Bachelor's Degree	7	2
SP10	Male	Primary	Master's degree	15	8
SP11	Female	High school	Master's degree	20	16
SP12	Male	High school	Master's degree	26	3

Table 1 presents the information on 12 school principals, highlighting their gender, school type, education level, seniority, and years of management experience. The majority are male (10 out of 12), with most serving in secondary or primary schools and a few in high schools. Nine principals hold a master's degree, while the remaining three have a bachelor's degree. Seniority among the participants ranges from 7 to 41 years, with management experience varying between 2 and 37 years. Overall, the study group reflects a diverse range of leadership experience, predominantly male representation, and a strong academic background, especially at the master's level.

Data Collection Tools and Process

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect the data. The interview questions were prepared by the researchers based on the literature review. Expert opinions were then sought, and after the evaluation of two field experts, the final version of the interview questions was determined. Based on the expert opinions, questions that could lead the participant or limit access to the required information were revised. After necessary revisions, the final version of the interview form was tested through a pilot interview with a school principal. After the pilot interview, the interview form was applied in interviews with participants. Audio recordings were made during the interviews for data collection. The first part of the interview form includes demographics about the participants, such as their gender, education level, field of study, professional seniority, years of experience in management, and the level of the school at which they work. The second part of the form consists of questions related to the professional development needs of school principals. The interview form includes two main questions focusing on professional development needs related to management functions (decision-making, planning, organizing, communication, leading, coordinating, and supervising), social development, and individual development. The interview questions are presented in Table 2;

Table 2*Interview Questions*

Topic	Interview Questions
Professional development needs	- In which areas of school management have you required—or do you foresee requiring—professional development? Please explain. - How do you assess your professional competencies when making decisions related to school management? Do you believe your current skills are sufficient? Which areas would you like to improve? - When planning educational and instructional activities involving school management (staff/students), how would you evaluate your professional competence? Do you find your skills adequate? Which ones do you feel need improvement? -How would you assess your professional abilities in managing organizational processes within school management (such as establishing hierarchy, assigning authority, and allocating resources)? Are your current skills sufficient? What areas need further development? -When engaging in communication related to school management (e.g., between administrators and teachers, teachers among themselves, or administrators and students), how do you evaluate your professional capability? Are there communication skills you feel need improvement? - How do you evaluate your ability to lead and influence others in the context of school management (e.g., guiding staff toward common goals)? Do you consider your leadership skills sufficient? What would you like to enhance? - In coordinating school stakeholders around shared goals, how do you assess your professional effectiveness? Do you find your coordination skills adequate? Which specific skills would benefit from further development? - When overseeing and supervising processes in school management, how do you evaluate your professional competence? Are your current supervisory skills sufficient? What aspects would you like to improve?
Suggestions	What suggestions do you have to ensure that school principals engage in meaningful, high-quality, and sustainable professional development?

For data collection, appointments were first made with the participants. The selection of the interview environment was left to the participant's preference to ensure they felt more comfortable. An appropriate environment was provided for participants to express their opinions openly and comfortably. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were informed that their identity would remain confidential and that each participant would be represented by a specific code. While ten participants consented to having their interviews recorded, two declined. Consequently, the researchers took detailed notes during those interviews and subsequently reviewed them with the participants for accuracy. The interviews were made during the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year and lasted between 35 and 50 minutes on average.

Data Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to analyse the collected data. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic coding involves the use of grounded theory coding procedures to develop themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This study adopted three thematic analysis stages (Thomas & Harden, 2008): (1) line-by-line coding of the data, (2) developing descriptive themes, and (3) generating analytical themes. The analysis process began with transcribing the recorded interviews which were then transferred to a computer environment for analysis. Once transcription was complete, the texts were thoroughly read, and

the extracted quotations were reread. Then, themes and sub-themes were developed in line with the research questions.

Validity and Reliability

The criteria for establishing validity and reliability in qualitative research, which seeks to understand processes, differ from those used in quantitative research (Merriam, 2018). In qualitative studies, it is essential to ensure access to accurate information (validity) and to describe the research process clearly and thoroughly (reliability) as emphasized by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021). Instead of traditional notions of reliability and internal/external validity, qualitative research adopts alternative concepts such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, consistency, and confirmability (Creswell, 2021). This study followed purposeful sampling technique and the detailed description approach to ensure transferability. Also, data collection and data analysis processes were described in detail. For credibility, the researchers conducted interviews with the principals at their respective schools and spent ample time observing their interactions with other staff members. This provided rich data for accurately describing the participants. Another strategy involved sharing the written accounts of the principals' views with them to obtain their consent and ensure accuracy. Lastly, the researchers submitted the data analysis to two experts to receive informed feedback and validation. What is important in qualitative research is how consistent the results are with the data (Merriam, 2018). The interpretation of the findings was supported by direct quotations from the interviews and previous research results.

Authors' Positionality

The first author currently serves as an assistant principal in a public school, with firsthand awareness of the professional development needs of school principals. He has participated in a series of in-service professional development programs initiated by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye. From his professional standpoint, he considers principals' professional development essential for improving school leadership practices and responding to the evolving demands placed on school administrators. However, he also recognizes that many current programs may not fully address the practical challenges principals face in their daily work. His experience was instrumental in designing the interview questions, recruiting participants, and analyzing the qualitative data.

The second author brings extensive experience in education, having worked for 11 years as a teacher in public schools and holding various administrative roles in higher education institutions. With a master's degree and a PhD in Educational Administration, she has conducted numerous studies focusing on school management. From her academic perspective, she views principals' professional development as a continuous and context-sensitive process that should be grounded in research as well as the realities of school practice. Her professional and academic background contributed to the development of the study's rationale, informed the review and synthesis of the literature.

Together, the authors' combined experiences in research, school management, and professional development allowed for a nuanced understanding of the topic and ensured that the study was grounded in both practical and theoretical knowledge.

Research Ethics

All the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed in the entire process from the planning, implementation, data collection to the analysis of the data. None of the actions specified under the second section of the Directive, "Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Actions" have been carried out.

During the writing process of this study, scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic media for evaluation.

Before the research, a permission document approved by the Governor's Office and the Provincial Directorate of National Education was obtained so that the application could be carried out in official public schools (dated 04.12.2024 and numbered 50288587-050.01.04-53681). In addition, participation in the research was conducted based on the voluntariness of the school principals.

Research ethics committee approval information

Name of the ethics committee: Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Giresun University

Date of the decision: 04.12.2024

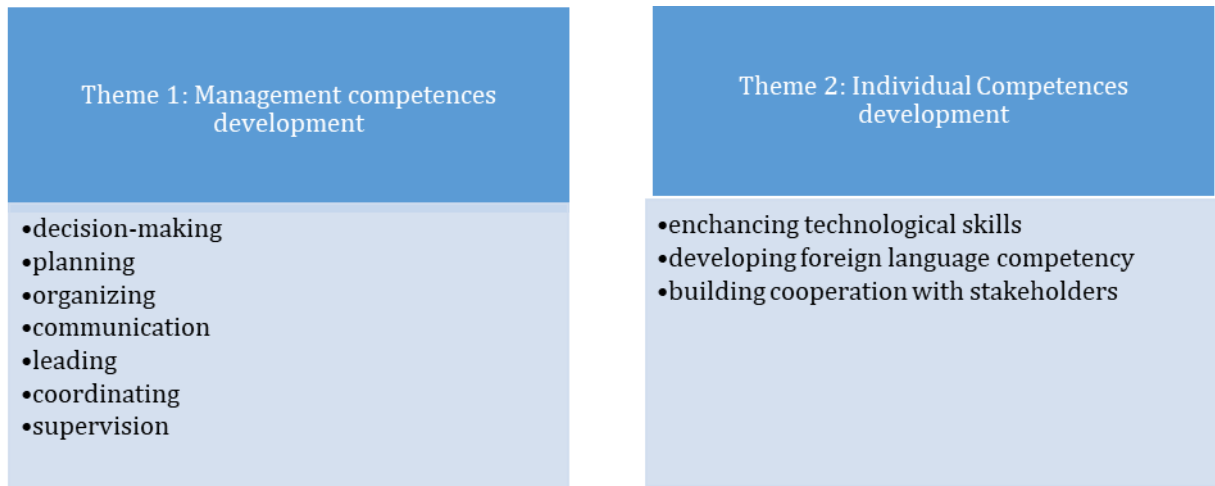
Document issue number: 50288587-050.01.04-53681

FINDINGS

This section presents findings under the themes, sub-themes along with quotations according to the research questions of the present study. The themes regarding RQ1 are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Professional Development Needs of School Principals



According to Figure 1, the professional development needs of the school principals include two main themes. The theme “Management Competences Development” includes core administrative skills essential for effective leadership. These are: decision-making, planning, organizing, communication, leading, coordinating, and supervision. These competencies reflect the foundational responsibilities of school principals in managing both people and processes within the school environment.

The second theme “Individual Competences Development” focuses on more personal and specialized areas of growth. It highlights the need to enhance technological skills, improve foreign language competency, and strengthen collaboration with stakeholders.

Findings on Professional Development Needs on Management Functions

Findings presented under the theme professional development needs on management functions revealed significant insights into the specific areas where school principals feel the need for growth in terms of management functions as sub-themes. Some participants shared their

perspectives on enhancing decision-making skills, emphasizing that achieving decisions through consensus and involving stakeholders in the process is essential for effective management and for reaching the most accurate and applicable outcomes. As the participant SP3 stated, school principals needed to develop their effective decision-making skills in order to involve all relevant stakeholders into decision-making process.

If a school principal can involve teachers and all stakeholders in the decision-making process and implement those decisions collectively, I believe this would be the greatest achievement for a school leader. In this sense, I feel the need for professional development regarding the decision-making process. (SP1).

I'm not perfect when it comes to making effective decisions; I need to improve myself. There is always room for personal growth. (SP3).

Regarding planning, one of the significant points is the introduction of the new educational model-the New Education Model in Türkiye- and the associated challenges this poses for school leadership. Several participants mentioned engaging with various resources, including Ministry-issued materials and private publications, as part of their initiative to stay updated. With the introduction of the new model, the participants regarded the process of planning as a top priority. However, they pointed that they needed a structured program which provides a rich collection of the references and practices.

... with the introduction of the New Educational Model initiated by The Ministry of National Education in Türkiye, I have reviewed many resources on my own initiative, even though I was not required to do so. I definitely strive to improve myself using a variety of resources. In particular, I find it necessary to engage with both Ministry-issued materials and private publications for my professional development about the new model (SP5).

Regulations, legislation, and educational programs are constantly evolving in today's context. Especially with the New Educational Model, certain changes are expected. We need to put more effort into understanding the content of the model, particularly in terms of legislation and the model's overall framework (SP8).

These data show a self-directed effort toward professional development and continuous learning, which is critical for navigating the complexities of modern education systems. Most participants emphasized the importance of planning and regulatory review in the implementation of the newly introduced Turkish Education Model. Additionally, conducting detailed planning, incorporating specifics into the planning process, and ensuring comprehensive preparation can positively influence the execution phase. These findings reveal that school principals perceive a strong need for professional training and support following the introduction of new educational policies by the MONE.

Findings on organizing highlight the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and peer support when facing real-world challenges. Also, it was found that they looked for professional development that sharpens their ability to manage complex, emotionally charged, and legally nuanced situations more effectively as SP3 stated.

... beyond what is written on paper, when problems arise in practice, I need to learn how to respond—partly by gaining insight from colleagues who have experience in this field. I consider myself competent in this area, but I also believe that in order to achieve excellence, I must continuously update and improve myself (SP3).

In terms of organizing, SP4 stated that he was good at handling any challenges arising in the school environment. Unlike the other views, this finding can be meaningful when interpreted with the years of experience of the aforementioned participant.

... in terms of organizing, I believe I am fair and a good organizational leader. I coordinate my colleagues, but sometimes I can act emotionally when assigning tasks. I try not to delve too deeply into the legal aspects of issues, which can occasionally put me in a difficult position (SP4).

It is observed that participants highlight the adaptation process as an essential factor in fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring proper orientation for newly appointed or transferred personnel within their institutions. SP1 mentioned that he felt sometimes the need to handle the situation when some new staff started working in his school as this process of organizing required efforts and great skills. SP4 stated that maintaining fairness and equality during the organizational process is considered crucial for ensuring the smooth functioning of the system; sometimes it is necessary to get required skills to do so.

We need to work on professionally helping the teachers who have recently joined our school adapt, being present with them, involving them in the management process, and supporting their development with a sense of leadership and governance. In this regard, we must also constantly update and improve our professional skills (SP1).

In terms of organizing, I believe I am fair and a good organizational leader. I coordinate my colleagues, but sometimes I can act emotionally when assigning tasks. I try not to delve too deeply into the legal aspects of issues, which can occasionally put me in a difficult position (SP4).

Most participants agreed on the importance of communication skills in leadership. SP2 expressed the need for development in aspects such as anger management in communication, maintaining composure in the face of events and sudden situations, and the ability to think rationally. *"I believe that the peace, trust, and happiness in my work environment are the result of these competencies. I am open to development in the area of anger management"* (SP2). This indicates that communication is in a constant state of improvement and contributes to both social and personal development.

Another participant SP3 highlighted the need in terms of cooperation with nongovernmental organizations. *"I think I need to improve myself in areas we call social responsibility-fields that can benefit society or address societal needs-by collaborating with NGOs"* (SP3). This finding can show that school leaders have an important role in communicating with stakeholders outside.

The power of influence in leadership is highlighted by participants, particularly in the context of charismatic leadership, as a direct contributor to the development of organizational cohesion. The concept of influence is conveyed as being related to factors such as a person's appearance, behaviors and attitudes, emotional structure, and thought processes. As SP3 pointed out, school leaders need some charismatic leadership skills for leading the staff effectively. *"I feel inadequate when it comes to leading employees, because I don't have the attitude or mindset of a charismatic leader. Maybe that's the shortcoming"* (SP3). Another participant, SP1, expressed the importance of good leadership skills to guide students and parents in the areas they need.

I especially find myself lacking in the area of guidance and counseling. I believe we have a serious need when it comes to guiding students. I can say that I feel a strong need for professional development in areas such as convincing parents and students, directing students appropriately, and in terms of management-specifically helping students gain a profession that suits them and meets their interests and needs (SP1).

Findings suggest that charismatic leadership, rooted in personal influence and relational skills, is key to fostering cohesion and guiding diverse stakeholders effectively.

Unlike aforementioned management skills, most participants stated that they had necessary skills to coordinate the staff in alignment with school goals. As SP4 told that he tried to encourage stakeholders for collective aims, SP8 was able to coordinate them towards shared goals. Regarding supervision, the findings reflected important aspects that require attention for effective school management.

I strive to bring people together and encourage collective action. While I am open to professional development in this area, I can say that I am competent (SP4).

I communicate and coordinate with school stakeholders to guide them toward shared goals. My skills are sufficient, but I am open to further improvement (SP8).

As previously stated by some participants, the new educational model initiated by the MoNE needed to be introduced by school principals. In this sense, the participant SP8 expressed the need for supervising staff required by the new model. *“I am open to professional development, especially in light of the improvements and changes in terms of supervision brought by newly introduced Turkish Education Model”* (SP8).

SP10 stated the need to have feedback strategies during supervision. *“I find it difficult to point out mistakes and errors directly to individuals during supervision”* (SP10). SP7 expressed the importance of training when supervising the classes in diverse academic backgrounds. *“I experience difficulties when it comes to supervising different subject areas except for mine”* (SP7).

Findings on Professional Development Needs on Individual Competences

Regarding the theme of professional development needs related to individual competencies, the findings revealed several areas in which school principals perceived a need for further growth.

Findings on professional development needs on individual competences revealed the need for enhancing technological skills, improving foreign language competency, and building cooperation with stakeholders. SP3 stated the importance of equipping themselves with digital technology such as artificial intelligence (AI), and this finding highlights how crucial for school leaders to keep updated with the latest technological improvements.

One of the areas I need to improve myself in is artificial intelligence. We are in an environment where almost everything presented to us can be created using AI, so I need to be able to determine whether something was generated by artificial intelligence or created by a person, whether there is human effort behind it or not (SP3).

SP7 told that he had difficulties when a new technological model was created to use everyday tasks, so he expressed the need for learning how to use recent modules introduced by the MoNE. *“If the modules we are required to use for our tasks are updated, I feel the need for seminars or training on how to use these modules”* (SP7).

SP10 and SP10 focused on social skills including foreign language competency and the ability to cooperate with other stakeholders.

I have always felt the lack of foreign language education and wished to improve myself in this area. Even though I do not necessarily need it, I still make an effort to participate in the activities being held (SP10).

I believe that I need to collaborate with NGOs in areas of social responsibility—specifically in fields that can benefit society or address community needs—so that I can develop myself in those areas (SP3).

Findings on Professional Development Suggestions

Regarding the second research question, suggestions on professional development of school principals were presented under two themes in Figure 2; self-initiated professional development and ministry-initiated professional development with sub-themes under each theme.

Figure2*Findings on Professional Development Suggestions*

Theme I. Self-initiated professional development suggestions	Theme II. Ministry-initiated professional development suggestions
•personal and continuous growth •voluntariness and motivation •social participation and cultural activities	•planned and continuous training •face to face training and peer sharing •learning from experts and academic development

Findings revealed that self-initiated professional development is fundamental to effective school leadership, as it fosters continuous personal growth, intrinsic motivation, and social engagement. The participants, SP1 and SP8, expressed the importance of lifelong learning and stated that school principals must actively seek updated knowledge and adaptable strategies to navigate evolving educational demands.

Being adaptable to change and embracing contemporary methods suited to the era are necessary. Reading books, utilizing digital content, and maintaining a habit of lifelong learning are crucial (SP1).

School principals should continuously develop themselves and be open to updated knowledge and skills (SP8).

As highlighted in the quotations, lifelong learning through books, digital content, and exposure to contemporary methods ensures that principals remain informed and responsive to change.

Participants SP11 and SP3 emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation which helps school leaders enhance their self-awareness and leadership efficacy. Equally important is the role of social and cultural involvement, as interaction with peers and participation in observation programs enrich leadership perspectives, encourage collaboration, and prevent professional isolation.

Professional development should not be a compulsory requirement but rather a personal motivation-driven process (SP11).

Participating in professional development activities voluntarily requires individual awareness and willingness (SP3).

Some participants stated that social participation and joining cultural activities are helpful for school principals' professional development.

Engaging in social activities helps school principals stay connected with communities instead of isolating themselves (SP3).

School leaders should meet with peers from different regions, exchange experiences, and participate in observation programs (SP12).

Collectively, these elements underscore the importance of self-directed learning, positioning school principals as proactive leaders who cultivate dynamic school environments through sustained, independent professional development.

Regarding ministry-initiated professional development, participants emphasized the need for structured, meaningful, and context-sensitive programs. Some participants stated this need: "Professional development activities should be conducted regularly, regardless of demand, ensuring sustainability" (SP9); "Ministry and education departments should organize training sessions periodically" (SP10); "Updating previously learned information through refresher training is important" (SP12).

Additionally, SP4 and SP5 stated the value of face-to-face training and peer sharing, and, this points out that this type of professional development programs enhance communication, promote innovative thinking, and offer practical insights through collaborative discussions.

Face-to-face training is vital for exchanging ideas, improving communication, and fostering innovative approaches (SP4)

Principals should hold sharing meetings to learn from each other and collaborative discussions among school administrators are beneficial for seeing real-world applications and solving challenges (SP5)

They stressed the importance of creating forums where school leaders can learn from each other's experiences. Another critical theme was learning from experts and supporting academic development; principals recommended that professional development should be led by specialists to ensure high-quality content, and encouraged academic advancement through graduate studies as a pathway to deepen professional expertise.

These findings highlight the need for professional development among school principals. Most participants agreed on the training needs that arose with the introduction of the New Educational Model, as it made management processes somewhat more challenging. Communication also emerged as an important part of daily tasks, with most participants strongly expressing the need to acquire different strategies for dealing with communication issues with colleagues and other stakeholders. Interestingly, senior participants reported that they did not require further professional development in management processes. This finding aligns with suggestions that emphasize the importance of collaboration between senior principals and their less-experienced colleagues.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This study examined the professional development needs of school principals in public schools and explored how qualified professional development opportunities could be ensured based on principals' perspectives. The findings demonstrate that principals' professional development needs are both multidimensional and context-sensitive, shaped by managerial responsibilities, individual competencies, and ongoing systemic reforms. Two main themes emerged regarding professional development needs—management competences and individual competences—alongside two complementary approaches to professional development provision: self-initiated and ministry-initiated professional development.

Regarding management competences, decision-making emerged as a central professional development need. While previous studies have emphasized participatory decision-making as a key leadership function (Malepathirana, 2024; Tofur & Yildirim, 2021), the present study extends this literature by showing that principals perceive collaborative decision-making not only as a leadership ideal but also as a necessary strategy for coping with increasing accountability and stakeholder diversity. This finding suggests that professional development should move beyond normative discussions of shared leadership and focus on practical decision-making frameworks that help principals balance institutional demands with participatory practices.

Planning competence was identified as another critical area, particularly in response to the New Turkish Education Model and frequently changing regulations. Fullan (2007) argued that educational leaders must continuously adapt their knowledge and skills in response to change; however, the present findings demonstrate that principals experience such change as persistent pressure rather than episodic reform. Unlike Lunenburg's (2010) depiction of planning as a stable managerial function aligned with school improvement goals, this study reveals that planning has become a dynamic and uncertain process under reform conditions. This highlights the need for ongoing, reform-aligned professional development rather than one-time training initiatives.

Communication and organizational challenges were also prominent in the findings. Consistent with Polat et al. (2018) and Kasalak (2020), communication emerged as a core professional development need. However, this study adds nuance to the existing literature by illustrating how communication difficulties intersect with emotional regulation, conflict management, and task coordination, including issues related to anger management. While Gökhan (2005) and Aydın et al. (2020) emphasized organizational and communication skills as areas needing improvement, the present findings suggest that communication competence should be conceptualized as an integrated socio-emotional skill set, rather than as a purely technical leadership function. This interpretation broadens existing research by emphasizing the emotional dimensions of school leadership communication.

Leadership development, particularly in influencing and motivating stakeholders, was another area strongly emphasized by the participants. Previous research has consistently highlighted leadership as a defining characteristic of effective school principals (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017; McEwan, 2018). Bozkurt (2023) demonstrated that leadership development supports positive school culture, while Döş and Savaş (2015) highlighted principals' role in motivating teachers and students. Building on these studies, the present research shows that principals explicitly seek practical and relational leadership skills, such as charisma and influence, suggesting a demand for professional development that translates leadership theory into observable leadership practices within schools.

In terms of supervision and guidance, principals reported difficulties in providing effective feedback, particularly when supervising subject areas outside their expertise. While Can and Köse (2015) emphasized the importance of regulatory and curricular knowledge for administrators, the present study highlights the instructional coaching dimension of the principalship. Consistent with Fazio (2009), the findings suggest that guidance and mentoring competencies can enhance the effectiveness of supervision by making feedback more purposeful and developmental. This contributes to the literature by reinforcing the view of principals as instructional coaches rather than solely evaluators.

Beyond management competences, the study identified professional development needs related to individual competences, including technological skills, foreign language proficiency, and cooperation skills. Day and Leithwood (2007) emphasized that successful school leaders engage in continuous learning to adapt to changing contexts. The present findings extend this perspective by linking individual competence development to self-actualization and personal fulfillment, suggesting that principals view personal growth as integral to effective leadership. In line with Fauziddin et al. (2022), the findings reinforce the importance of lifelong learning as a foundation for sustainable educational leadership.

A significant contribution of this study lies in its contextual focus on Türkiye's ongoing educational reforms. While previous studies on principals' professional development needs in Türkiye (Polat et al., 2018; Kasalak, 2020; Bozkurt, 2023) identified common leadership and management challenges, the present study distinguishes itself by explicitly identifying professional development needs arising from the New Turkish Education Model. Additionally, the emergence of artificial intelligence training as a professional development need represents a novel finding that reflects evolving expectations of school leadership in technologically advanced educational environments.

Regarding professional development provision, the findings revealed two overarching approaches: self-initiated and ministry-initiated professional development. Principals emphasized the importance of personal responsibility, intrinsic motivation, and autonomy in sustaining professional growth. This aligns with Day and Leithwood's (2007) argument that leadership development should move beyond compliance-driven models. Moreover, the findings support self-determination theory, which posits that autonomy enhances engagement and persistence in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). At the same time, principals expressed a strong

preference for ministry-initiated programs that are structured, context-sensitive, and practice-oriented.

Peer interaction and collaboration were identified as important components of effective professional development. Consistent with DuFour and Eaker (2009), the findings suggest that professional learning communities enable principals to construct knowledge collectively through shared experience. This indicates that self-initiated professional development is not solely individualistic but is also embedded in social and collaborative learning processes.

Finally, principals' preference for face-to-face, ministry-led training aligns with research emphasizing the value of direct interaction in fostering innovation and practical problem-solving (Sahlin, 2025; Faizuddin, 2022). The present study extends this research by demonstrating that principals value face-to-face formats not only for knowledge acquisition but also for professional validation and shared meaning-making.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that school principals' professional development needs are shaped by managerial complexity, individual growth expectations, and ongoing educational reforms. The findings suggest that professional development is most effective when it integrates self-initiated learning with well-structured, ministry-led programs. By explicitly situating principals' needs within the context of systemic change in Türkiye, this study offers an original contribution to the literature and provides evidence-based implications for the design of responsive and sustainable professional development systems.

Recommendations

- The Ministry of National Education and local education authorities should periodically conduct surveys or similar tools to identify the professional development needs of school principals and use these insights to design targeted training programs supported by detailed annual planning.
- Training programs should focus on consensus-building, stakeholder engagement, and ethical decision-making.
- Principals experiencing communication challenges should receive training in self-regulation, active listening, and assertive communication strategies.
- Training on supervision techniques should include classroom observation methods, feedback models, and differentiated supervision approaches.
- Participation in in-service training, particularly in critical areas such as implementing new educational models and technological development, may be made mandatory to ensure consistent leadership quality.
- Principals who embrace professional development as a lifelong philosophy should be recognized and rewarded to serve as role models for their peers.
- Regular sharing meetings organized by local education authorities should be held to foster collaboration and disseminate best practices.
- Comprehensive initiatives should encourage principals' participation in graduate education, foreign language learning, and the adoption of new practices and technologies.

Limitations of the Study

This study is qualitative in nature and conducted with the school principals working in public schools in Giresun in Türkiye. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized to larger populations. New studies can be focused on larger sample groups supported by quantitative data. Additionally, a comparison study conducted with school principals working in public and private schools could provide insightful results and perspective about professional development of school leaders and give constructive feedback on how professional development programs should be implemented.

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Statement of Contribution Rate

The authors of the study contributed equally to all processes of the study.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

As the study authors, we declare that we do not have any declaration of interest/conflict.

Statement of Use of Large Language Models

This study utilized Large Language Models solely for linguistic editing and to improve clarity of expression during the manuscript preparation process. Large Language Models were not used in the design of the research, data analysis, or scientific interpretation. The scientific content of the study and full ethical responsibility remain entirely with the author(s).

Statement of Publication Ethics

All the rules specified in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions" were complied with in the whole process from planning, implementation, data collection to data analysis of this research. None of the actions specified under the second section of the Directive, "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", have been carried out.

In the writing process of this study, scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

Research ethics committee approval information

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZ

Giriş

Araştırmalar, okul liderliği ile okul başarısı arasında güçlü bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. Etkili okul müdürleri, sadece akademik başarıyı değil, aynı zamanda öğrenci ve personelin sosyal-duygusal gelişimini desteklemede önemli rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle, okul müdürlerinin sürekli mesleki gelişimini sağlamak gerekmektedir. Modern eğitim sistemlerinde okul müdürlerinden; karar verme, planlama, iletişim, insan kaynakları yönetimi ve teknoloji kullanımı gibi çok yönlü becerilere sahip olmaları beklenmektedir. Hızlı değişim çağında, okul müdürleri, 21. yüzyılın gerektirdiği beceri ve yetkinliklerle donatılmış gelecek nesilleri şekillendirme konusunda önemli bir sorumluluk taşımaktadır. Okul liderlerinin, sürekli değişen çevrelerinin getirdiği zorluklara etkili bir şekilde yanıt verebilmek için yaşam boyu öğrenen bireyler olmaları gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Modern eğitim sistemlerinin gerekliliklerini karşılamak, okul müdürlerinin bilgi, pratik beceriler ve profesyonel tutumların bir karışımına sahip olmalarını gerektirmektedir. Türkiye’de okul müdürleri için hizmet öncesi resmi bir eğitim bulunmamakla birlikte, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı çeşitli hizmetiçi eğitim programları sunmaktadır. Ancak, bu programlara katılım sınırlıdır ve daha çok bölgesel ihtiyaçlara göre şekillenmektedir. Araştırmalar, okul müdürlerin kişisel gelişim, teknik beceriler, okul-toplum ilişkileri ve etkili iletişim gibi alanlarda gelişime ihtiyaç duyduğunu göstermekte; ayrıca akran temelli öğrenme yöntemlerini en etkili gelişim yolu olarak görmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de kamu okullarında görev yapmakta olan okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını belirlemeyi ve bu gelişimin sürdürülebilirliği için önerilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu araştırma, Türkiye’deki devlet okullarında görev yapan okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemek amacıyla betimleyici nitel bir araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma grubu, Giresun ilindeki çeşitli okul türlerinde görev yapan 12 okul müdüründen oluşmuştur. Katılımcılar, kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiştir. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmış; görüşme soruları literatür taraması ve uzman görüşleri doğrultusunda hazırlanmıştır. Görüşmeler 2024-2025 öğretim yılının birinci döneminde yapılmış ve ortalama 35-50 dakika sürmüştür. Veriler, tematik analiz yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Analiz sürecinde, okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçları “yönetim yeterlilikleri” ve “bireysel yeterliliklerin gelişimi” olmak üzere iki ana tema altında incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, okul müdürlerinin karar alma, planlama, iletişim, liderlik gibi yönetsel işlevlerde ve kişisel gelişim alanlarında mesleki gelişime ihtiyaç duydukları belirlenmiştir.

Bulgular

Okul yöneticileri, mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını özellikle yönetim fonksiyonları (karar verme, planlama, örgütlenme, iletişim, liderlik, koordinasyon ve denetim) ve bireysel yeterlilikler (teknolojik beceriler, yabancı dil, paydaşlarla iş birliği) alanlarında dile getirmişlerdir. Karar alma süreçlerinde paydaş katılımı ve etkili planlamanın önemine vurgu yaparken, yeni eğitim modeline uyum sağlama konusunda yapısal destek talepleri öne çıkmıştır. Örgütlenme ve iletişimde hem teorik bilgi hem de uygulama deneyimine ihtiyaç duyulmakta; liderlikte ise karizmatik ve rehberlik becerilerinin geliştirilmesi gerekliliği belirtilmektedir. Teknolojik yeniliklere ayak uydurma, yabancı dil yetkinliklerinin artırılması ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarıyla iş birliği kurma gereksinimi de öne çıkan bireysel gelişim alanlarıdır. Yöneticiler, mesleki gelişimin sürdürülebilirliği için ise kişisel motivasyon, gönüllülük, sürekli öğrenme ve sosyal katılımın yanı sıra bakanlık tarafından düzenli, yapılandırılmış, uzman destekli eğitim programlarının önemini vurgulamışlardır. Okul müdürlerinin etkili karar verme, paydaşları sürece dâhil etme ve bilinçli kararlar alma konularında gelişim ihtiyacı hissettiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Okulun diğer paydaşlarıyla iş birliği içinde karar almanın önemi vurgulandı. İletişimin özellikle öfke kontrolü ve akılcı tepki stratejileri bağlamında mesleki gelişim için önemli bir alan olarak öne çıktığı belirlenmiştir. Müdürler ayrıca, liderlik becerilerinin geliştirilmesi, stratejik rehberlik

sağlanması ve disiplinler arası yetkinlikler dâhil olmak üzere daha güçlü koordinasyon ve denetim becerilerine ihtiyaç duyduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bireysel yeterliklere ilişkin ihtiyaçlar, teknolojik becerilerin artırılması ve yabancı dil yeterliliğinin iyileştirilmesi şeklinde ortaya çıkmıştır. Daha kıdemli olan okul müdürleri yönetim süreçleri ve bireysel gelişimleri bağlamında daha az gelişim ihtiyaçları olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Araştırma, okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişiminin, etkili liderlik yapmalarını, öğretmenleri desteklemelerini ve öğrenci başarısını artırmalarını sağlayacak bilgi ve becerilerle donanmaları açısından hayati öneme sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de devlet okullarındaki okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Müdürlerin yönetim (karar alma, planlama, iletişim, liderlik) ve bireysel (teknoloji, yabancı dil, iş birliği) becerilerinde gelişime ihtiyaç duyduğu ortaya koyulmuştur. Okul müdürlerinin çeşitli örgütsel zorluklarla karşılaştıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu zorluklar arasında öğretmenleri uygun görevlerle koordine etmek yer almakta, bu durum zaman zaman öfke kontrolü gibi iletişim sorunlarına yol açabilmektedir. Okul ortamında yapılan işlerin dağıtımı söz konusu olduğunda, bu durum diğer yönetim süreçleriyle olan iletişimin önemini vurgulamış ve dolayısıyla bu alanlarda mesleki gelişimin gerekliliğini ortaya koymuştur. Etkili iletişim becerilerinin eksikliği ve iletişim sürecini yönetme yetersizliği de araştırma bulgularında mesleki gelişim ihtiyacı olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Araştırmalar, okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim göstermesi gereken başlıca alanlardan birinin etkili iletişim becerileri olduğu belirtilmiştir. İletişim becerilerinin eksikliğinin yeni atanan okul müdürleri üzerindeki etkileri ele alınmıştır. Birçok çalışma, iletişim yetkinliklerinin okul liderlerinin temel özelliklerinden biri olarak taşıdığı önemi vurgulamıştır. Özellikle yeni eğitim modeli ve reformlar yönetim süreçlerinde belirsizlik yaratmakta, bu da sürekli hizmet içi eğitimin önemini artırmaktadır. Müdürler, mesleki gelişim önerilerini iki başlıkta sunmuştur: Kendi inisiyatifleriyle başlayan ve bakanlık tarafından organize edilen programlar. Kişisel motivasyonun, yapılandırılmış ve yüz yüze eğitimlerle desteklenmesi daha etkili bulunmuştur. Çalışma, yerel ve merkezi eğitim otoritelerinin müdürlerin ihtiyaçlarını düzenli takip edip hedefe yönelik eğitimler düzenlemesini, mesleki gelişime önem veren müdürlerin ödüllendirilmesini ve iş birliği ortamlarının artırılmasını önermektedir.