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Ibrahim H. Karatas

Harun Parpucu

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# HOW ABOUT THE REAL RESPONDERS' PERCEPTIONS? A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION THROUGH METAPHORS IN USA AND TURKEY

*by Ibrahim H. Karatas and Harun Parpucu*

## **Abstract**

Expectations of school administration changed dramatically over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the roles and responsibilities of school administrators must be re-defined for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current research aimed at revealing the perception of school leadership by school administrators who were expected to cope with problems and enable students to succeed in the U.S. and Turkey. Comparative case study design was used to analyze and compare the U.S. and Turkey school administrators' perceptions of school leadership through metaphors. The study sample consisted of 47 school administrators employed in K-12 schools in Turkey and the U.S. The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview form. Data obtained were analyzed through content analysis. As a result, 47 participants defined school administration through 43 different metaphors. Participants used 23 positive, 13 negative, and 11 neutral metaphors to define school administration. Within these three categories, five themes emerged: porter (13 metaphors), firefighter (11 metaphors), father (10 metaphors), captain (7 metaphors), and maestro (6 metaphors). Although participants from two countries used mostly different metaphors, school administration was perceived similarly in Turkey and the US. This showed that in both countries, school administrators take on similar responsibilities and roles. The most distinct difference between the school administrators in the two countries was that school administrators from Turkey more unfavorably approach the job they take on, while school administrators from the U.S. defined their job as being more complicated.

## 1. Introduction

*"Designing a program for educational administrators or writing a book on educational administration is like writing a book on child care". (James G. March, 1978)*

There were dramatic changes in the definition and content of school administration throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Beck & Murphy, 1993). However, this change process happened parallel to successive developments, and soft transitions were experienced between periods. Yet, social developments and improvements in technology during the last two decades moved school administration to a completely different dimension (Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). Factors such as globalization, neo-liberalism, communication and information technology, new economic structure, and social life have changed not only the individual and society, but the concept of administration (Hesapçioğlu, 2001). This wave of change has required U.S. to restructure the definition of education, paradigms related to our schools, and the process of learning and teaching. When adapting education and the school to the new situation and struggling with new problems, the greatest responsibility for adapting to change has been on school administrators' shoulders, requiring great sacrifices of them. Today, particularly in developed countries, as the number of those who want to become school administrators gradually decreases, efficiency of those in the profession is discussed in terms of competency and capacity the job requires. Each year, many official and non-official organizations prepare reports on school leadership and the state of school leaders. The definition of educational leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, roles of educational leaders, and suggestions on competencies required by these roles are listed. Countless studies conducted on school administration and educational leadership, as part of the report quoted below, point out that in the medium term finding school administrators will be a significant challenge (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008;).

Unfortunately, when it comes to cultivating school leaders, current state-level practices are, at best, haphazard. In the worst cases, they actually may be keeping talented people out of the job. States are only just beginning to address the weaknesses in their principal pipelines—and even then, they are not yet developing the strategic approaches necessary to truly improve the talent pool and improve student outcomes (Campbell & Gross, 2012). How do the school administrators, who are expected to combine both education and administration, describe the job they do? Our hope is that the responses we receive to this question will lead the U.S. to make a more accurate analyses and better decisions on the new definition of school administration.

## 2. Changing Face of the School Leadership

Expectations for school administrators dramatically changed in parallel to social change throughout 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this change process, roles and responsibilities of school administrators were constantly re-defined. This change is obviously seen in the unique research in which Beck and Murphy (1993) observed the development process of school administration from 1920s to 1990s. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), school leadership was considered as a "values broker in the 1920s, scientific manager in the 1930s, democratic leader in 1940s, theory guided administrator in the 1950s, bureaucratic executive in the 1960s, humanistic facilitator in the 1970s, and instructional

leader the 1980s" (p. 202). In the same study, Beck and Murphy (1993, 190-195), while expressing their providence of roles expected from the school administrator in 1990s, stated that now school leaders needed to assume the following roles: leader, servant, organizational architect, social architect, educator, moral agent and a person in the community. According to Bredeson (1985), items of ethos characterizing the school administration were purpose-maintenance, survival, *and* vision. Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith (1994) described school administrators in 1990s as learning organization catalysts. In addition, school administrators had to assume new responsibilities because of changes experienced in the last 20 years. In this period, described as the post-industrial age, the "changing economic fabric and shifting social and political dynamics" altered the context of school administration (Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). According to Murphy and Forsyth (1999), these developments in social, economic, and political spheres changed "the nature of schooling" as well. School governance, systems of organization, and learning and teaching had to be re-discovered.

Nations, in order to adjust their education systems to this wave of change, made reform-like alterations in educational administration, content, and even in duration of education. In the U.S. one of the two countries which was comparatively analyzed in this research, the most apparent practice of this change process was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law (Bush, 2001), put into effect in 2002; the National Educational Technology Plan (NETP), designed in 2010; and the implementation of "common core"(Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011), which also began in the same year. Turkey, on the other hand, radically changed its approach to education in 2004 and moved from behavioristic to constructivist education. Turkey renewed all curriculums on K-12 level (Semenderoğlu & Gülersoy, 2010) and, in 2012, increased the duration of compulsory education from 8 to 12 years (Başbakanlık, 2012). In addition, in 2011, it initiated the FATİH Project (Kayaduman, Sirakaya, & Seferoğlu, 2011) ,which proposed providing all students and teachers with tablets and installing smart boards in all classrooms to build a technology infrastructure in education.

Developments throughout the 2000s and changes experienced in education as a result of these developments have made school leaders' traditional roles more difficult and complicated. According to the recent work analyzing the spirit of leadership by Cherry and Spiegel (2006), "the educational leaders are (a) the touchstone: standard bearer and institutional anchor, (b) the advocate: proponent of a cause beyond oneself, and (c) the parent: everyone's icon of moral leadership." According to Linn, Sherman, and Gill (2007) school leadership candidates perceive school leadership as "(a) protection and nurturing, (b) skill, adventure and problem solving; (c) challenge, risk and threat and (d) chance and luck".

Today, the major problems of U.S. education can be listed in nine topics: funding, oversized classes, NCLB, obesity, poverty, technology, bullying, students' behaviors and attitudes, and lack of parental involvement. The first three of these problems may be related to political preferences rather than skills and efforts of school leaders, and the solutions should be considered more or less on the same level. However, obesity

and poverty are completely out of the school leader's control, and fighting these issues has been hard. It may be said that lack of parental involvement, bullying, students' behaviors and attitudes, and technology are all also out of the school leader's control; however, they are different than others as there may be solutions to these problems within the school.

Similar problems prevail in Turkey. School administrators undertake the duty of providing the children of families with low SES, migrating from rural areas to the cities and living in disadvantaged regions, with equal educational opportunities at schools with classrooms accommodating numbers over the national average. School leadership becomes harder when violence, students' behavior problems, and parental indifference come together. Different from the U.S., schooling not in favor of females, demands for education in mother language by particularly Kurdish citizens, and Alevi citizens' demands for religious education are problems affecting school administrators that are beyond their control. However, school administrators directly face these problems and are expected to make the school a place where each student can be successful. Whereas the U.S. and Turkey have relatively similar problems, their socio-cultural and political structures are different from each other.

Naturally, in a study comparing different countries, basic differences must be considered, as these differences create different contexts and unique new problems for school leaders. Each nation has unique cultural codes as well as administration styles. To understand education systems in European countries, for example, the European Commission presents the political and economic background and then the general organization of the education system and administration of education in its reports on education systems of member and candidate countries (The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency [EACEA], 2013). To productively compare the two countries in this research, it was helpful to investigate state and government structures, designs of education systems, socio-cultural characteristics, and finally economical welfare levels. School leaders' powers and responsibility areas in relation to educational organization differ as the socio-cultural nature of each country shapes the expectations of education, school, and, thus, school leaders. The social welfare level and positive and negative effects of the budget allocated for education should also be considered.

Each country, in relation to its own social and economic nature, adopted a governing principle emphasizing central or local administration (Turan, Yücel, Karataş, & Demirhan, 2010). Decentralization is about shifts in the location of those who govern, about transfers of authority, from those in one location or level vis-à-vis education organizations, to those in another level. Four possible locations of authority were considered: the central government; provincial, state or regional governing bodies; county or district governments; and the schools (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, 17). Therefore, decentralization can be practiced in four different styles: de-concentration, delegation, devaluation, and privatization (Rondinelli, Nelson, & Cheema, 1984 as cited in McGinn & Welsh, 1999, 18).

The Turkish education system adopted a centralized administration style in the administration of public services. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE), for example, was organized in accordance with centralized administration principles. The central organization of the MoNE, through legal regulations issued within authority extension principle, transfers authority and responsibilities to administrators in the provinces (Kıran, 2001 as cited in Turan et al., 2010, 2-3). On the other hand, in the U.S., all powers and responsibilities in relation to education were assigned to the states. At the time of this study, education was not considered a national problem as in Turkey. Each state had the authority and responsibility of organizing its own education system and states transferred a considerable amount of authority and responsibilities in relation to education to local school districts (Işık, 2000). Therefore, in the U.S., almost all education administration and planning and most of the budget was assigned to the state, while employment of school administrators and teachers was conducted by local education districts (Işık, 2000). On the other hand, in Turkey, education administration, planning, and budgeting were performed completely by the central government, and again the central government appointed school administrators and teachers (Turan et al., 2010).

Another distinction that affected how school administrators perceived their jobs in the two countries was the socio-cultural difference. According to Bennett (1998), people learn how to behave through socialization into the institutions of the culture, which leads them to behave in ways that perpetuate those same institutions. Culture can be defined as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from those of another (Hofstede, 1986, 389). It would be pertinent to investigate school administrators' perception and interpretation of their own profession based on the Halls' (Hall & Hall, 1990) "low and high context communication" theory and "small and large power distance" theory developed by Hofstede (1986), since school leadership governs schools that are formal organizations of education, a social institution closely connected to cultural structure. Schools are organizations with the soundest social relationships and communication. In this process, while school administrators do their jobs, they are influenced by cultural communication styles and power perceptions that also affect legal regulations covering their job descriptions.

In fact, according to Hofstede (1986), the four basic dimensions of power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance should be considered to reveal cultural differences. However, since school administrators have power by law, the researchers focused on the difference between the two countries in relation to power distance. Power distance, as a characteristic of a culture, defines the extent to which the less powerful person in a society accepts inequality in power and considers it normal. Inequality exists within any culture, but the degree of it that is tolerated varies between one culture and another (Hofstede, 1986, 390). Hofstede (1986) found in his research, which included 53 countries, that the U.S. and Turkey had considerably different cultural characteristics in relation to power distance and individualism. The U.S. had a highly individualistic culture structure featuring small power distance, while large power distance and low individualism characterized Turkey's cultural structure.

The U.S. and Turkey also have different cultural characteristics in terms of communication styles. According to the Halls' (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6) definition, high context communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message, while a low context communication is just the opposite: the mass of information is vested in the explicit code. In their study, the Halls consider the U.S. among nations with low context communication, whereas the Japanese, Arabs, and Aegean people – Turkish are between Aegean and Arab cultures – are which high context countries. This basic difference in socio-cultural structure forms the context and the style of school administrators' communications and relationships with their superiors, teachers, students, parents, and society. The problems school administrators face may vary due to the differences, and these differences shape their strategies to cope with problems (see Figure 1).

Finally, when per capita income and expenses per student were examined, a significant difference between the two countries was seen. Per capita income in the U.S. was \$42,000, whereas it was \$13,000 in Turkey (World Bank, 2012). In the U.S., yearly expenses per student on elementary level were \$11,000, and \$2,000 in Turkey. This difference naturally was reflected in school administrators' and teachers' incomes (Arabacı, 2011).

### 3. Purpose and Significance

The current research aimed to reveal the perception of school leadership by school administrators who are expected to deal with issues while enabling students to be successful in the U.S. and Turkey. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How do the school administrators, in the U.S. and Turkey, describe school leadership?
2. What are the similarities and differences in school administrators' perception of school leadership in the U.S. and Turkey?

The current research aimed at revealing the metaphors related to school leadership as it was a continuation of the study exemplified by Beck and Murphy (1993) and similar studies conducted later. This continuation may help reveal whether metaphors related to school leadership have changed in recent years. However, this study was the first to comparatively analyze the U.S. and Turkey in relation to metaphors related to school leadership. Through this study, a comparative view of school leadership may be obtained. In addition, revealing school administrators' points of view of their professions in these two countries with their different contexts, problems, and opportunities could make it easier for the U.S. to analyze school leadership. Examples from various countries may provide other countries with ideas of how to address their own issues.

Through this research, it may be observed whether there was a difference between the definition, as in the literature, and practice of school leadership, if any. It may also be perceived in what mood and through what motivation the school leaders do their job. The current study was expected to provide useful findings on the different type of steps to take to make school leadership a preferable job and useful data to be used to review the developed programs for training school leaders.

## 4. Methodology

### **Research Design and the Study Group**

In the current research, a comparative case study design was used to analyze and compare the U.S. and Turkish school administrators' perceptions of school leadership through metaphors. Case studies are used to empirically investigate a current case within the context of real life, particularly when the limits of the context and the case are not clearly stated (Yin, 2002). Comparative case studies, on the other hand, enable the U.S. to understand and evaluate cases within a larger framework (Ragin, 1987). Metaphor analysis, preferred in this research and often cited recently in studies on educational administration, investigates the culture of an organization, and "the study of metaphors can shed light on the meanings that organizational members attach to events, processes, and roles," according to Bolman and Deal (1989). According to Bredeson (1988), "metaphors can broaden perspectives, enhance understanding, and provide insight into organization, operation and administration of the schools.

The study's sample consisted of 27 school administrators employed in K-12 schools in Istanbul, Turkey, and 23 school administrators employed in K-12 schools in Iowa, U.S. To provide a variety of genders, professional experiences, and the types of school, "maximum variety" sampling was used. Out of school administrators employed in schools in Turkey, 24 were males and three were females. Seven participants had 1-10 years of professional experience; 10 participants had 11-20 years of professional experience; and 10 participants had 21 or more years of professional experience. The number of participants employed on various school levels was as follows: One participant was employed at the pre-school level, 12 participants at the elementary level, and 13 participants at various secondary education institutions. Fifteen school administrators employed in the U.S. were male, whereas 8 were female. Eight participants had 1-10 years of professional experience; seven participants had 11-20 years of professional experience; and eight participants had 21 and more years of professional experience. The number of participants employed on various school levels in the U.S. were as follows: ten participants were employed at elementary, six participants at middle school, and seven participants at high schools.

### **Data Collection Tool, Data Collection, and Analysis**



The data collection tool of the current research was a semi-structured interview form. The question pattern on the interview form was follows: In your opinion, what does school administration look like? Why? (Sample: School administration looks like ..., because ... ). The interview form was prepared in two languages, Turkish and English. For validity of the interview form, 2 academics of educational administration from Turkey and 2 academics of educational administration from the U.S. were consulted. In addition, the prepared interview form was checked by a qualitative research expert with regard to qualitative study techniques and by a native English-speaking editor in respect to language efficiency.

Research was conducted through face-to-face interviews in schools where participants worked. During the first 3 months of 2012, K-12 school administrators in Istanbul, Turkey and during the last 3 months of the same year, K-12 school administrators in Iowa, USA, were visited in the institutions where they were employed. Data obtained were analyzed through content analysis. Metaphors obtained through the research were at first grouped as positive, negative, and neutral. Later, these three categories were classified within themselves. When building the positive category, metaphors through which the participant praised his/her job, talked about it with pride, and emphasized its material and moral gains were considered. When building the negative category, metaphors through which the participant mentioned his/her job with its problems, feelings of depression and exhaustion, focus on hardships and problems, and emphasis on material and moral losses were considered. The neutral category pertained to metaphors by which participants talked about their jobs by emphasizing professional requirements and impartially describing the job. Thus, perceptions of school administration in both countries were revealed within the limitation of participants' responses.

## 5. Findings

Forty seven school leaders from the U.S. and Turkey described school leadership with 43 different metaphors. Twenty-three of these metaphors are grouped under positive, 13 negative, and 11 neutral. The metaphors participants used in relation to school administration are found in Table 1. When compared with their colleagues in Turkey, U.S. school administrators expressed more metaphors with positive associations with school administration. Out of the total 23 metaphors with positive association, 13 were expressed by the U.S. school administrators, whereas 10 were uttered by Turkish school administrators. Negative metaphors were mostly expressed by the school administrators from Turkey. Only one out of a total of 13 negative metaphors was uttered by a U.S. school administrator. Neutral metaphors, on the other hand, were mostly expressed by the U.S. school administrators. Only two school administrators from Turkey expressed neutral metaphors for school administration. Metaphors were grouped into five themes in relation to their common associations. When a theme was named, the most mentioned metaphor within that theme was considered. These five

themes were: porter, firefighter, father, captain, and maestro. In the following section, metaphors under these themes and their interpretation are found.

### **School Administrator as Porter**

Metaphors collected under the theme of “porter” expressed negative associations held by school administrators with negative views of school administration. Thus, the school administrator was considered as the one who was required to take hard and heavy jobs to be done with physical strength (porter, shepherd), without command and power (sheep, cow), without authority (I have the drums but my superiors have the drumsticks), and without qualifications (guard). School administrators should follow commands as instructed (orderly). They have no right to speak (king without a sword in the middle of war). However, they look deceptively very powerful and authorized (ostrich, panda). In addition, they perceive themselves as false heroes (Don Quixote) of activities that others consider nonsense. Besides all these, they are viewed as the immediate ones (scapegoat) who are affected and responsible for all shortcomings, inadequacies, and problems. Finally, school administrators were described as those who are responsible for many, and therefore they keep trying in bewilderment to satisfy various superiors (Hormuz with seven husbands). There were 13 metaphors under the theme of porter. Only one of these metaphors was expressed by a U.S. school administrator (see Table 2).

### **Comparing Turkey and the US**

The majority of the metaphors falling under the theme of “porter” were expressed by school administrators from Turkey. Only one school administrator from the U.S. expressed a metaphor (panda) falling under this theme. In fact, in both countries, positions of school administrators were assigned through personal applications by candidates. However, the strict centralized system of education in Turkey limits school administrators’ power, authority, and initiative (Kıran, 2001 as cited in Turan et al., 2010). On the contrary, the localized and school-centered structure of education in the U.S. allows school administrators more power, authority, and initiative (Işık, 2000). This difference could be considered influential on the fact that the majority of metaphors falling under this theme have been expressed by school administrators from Turkey.

### **School Administrator as Firefighter**

Metaphors collected under the theme of “firefighter” are those which focus on the details of the duty, without expressing positive or negative views on school administration. Thus, the school administration presents a complex (local market) and multi-dimensional (all-encompassing) structure. This structure requires school administrators to have various abilities and skills as well as a well-rounded personality (zoo) since school administration is a position in which constant emotional variety is experienced (roller coaster). In addition, the school administrator is the person who needs to be always ready (firefighter) to solve potential problems to occur within and outside school, and the school administrator is expected to solve each problem (aspirin). In order to

perform all these duties without hurting anyone and breaking anybody's heart, the school administrator should be a reconciler (mediator) and s/he should sometimes be able to act ostensibly (juggling). Consequently, the school administrator's is perceived as a duty requiring much effort (hard worker), involving much risk (swamp), rigor, and attention. There were 11 different metaphors under the theme of "firefighter." Two of these metaphors were expressed by school administrators from Turkey (see Table 3).

### **Comparing Turkey and the U.S.**

Metaphors falling under the theme of "firefighter" were mostly expressed by the U.S. school administrators. Metaphors of "aspirin" and "local market" were expressed by Turkish school administrators. The U.S. school administrators had preferred metaphors including associations impartial and mostly related to the details of the job. It may be said that this referred to the position of school administrator as a described profession in the U.S. The school administration profession in the U.S. was described by professional associations established in 1920s, and today the standards, ethical principles, and job description of school administration are mostly defined (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). These standards constitute the basics for school administrator training programs, and most state education departments request that candidates applying to be school administrators document that they have these competencies. In Turkey, on the other hand, school administration is not defined as a profession (Turan & Şişman, 2002). In addition, in the U.S., where school autonomy is on higher levels, school administrators are expected to decide many issues during the administration process. However, in Turkey, school administrators' decision responsibilities are quite less compared with those in the U.S. (Işık, 2000).

### **School Administrator as Father**

Metaphors falling under the theme of "father" were those including the positive but emotional associations about school administration. Thus, school administration was considered a structure with members having informal relationships with one another, based on trust, in a natural job distribution (family). Therefore, the school administrator was described as a the natural leader and superior (father) personality who treats everyone with compassion, protects (caring) his charges, very altruistically fights the challenges (father), and even dedicates (dedicated) himself to this duty. School administrators, while managing this sincere process, think that they take on a role (physician) requiring a delicate sensitivity and attention as well as fighting the problems they face (challenge). School administrators stated that they considered themselves as being reliable people (trustworthy) as the most significant qualification completing all these characteristics. Ten metaphors fell under the theme of "father" and were expressed through eight different concepts. Six of these metaphors were expressed by the school administrators from Turkey and four by the U.S. school administrators (see Table 4).

### **Comparing Turkey and the U.S.**

Although school administrators in both countries expressed the metaphors falling under the theme of “father” in close frequencies, school administrators from Turkey emphasized the emotional aspects of the position more. The fact that metaphors of “father” and “family” were utilized by school administrators from Turkey referred to the difference in socio-cultural structures of the two societies. Compared with the U.S., Turkey has lower individualism and larger power distance (Hofstede, 1986), and this may be considered effective in school administrators’ positioning of themselves. This socio-cultural difference was reflected, through their position, in the school administrators’ relationships with their staffs and school communities in Turkey and the U.S. Compared with Turkey, school administrators in the U.S. considered themselves closer to the staff and the school community and defined their duty in a more professional approach. However, the metaphor of “dedicated,” expressed by participants from both countries, indicated that the nature of school administration requires dedication and altruism.

### **School Administrator as Captain**

Metaphors falling under the theme of “captain” included those with positive associations of school administration and those related to the concept of “leadership”. Thus, school administrators are foresighted and prescient (visionary). They have a sharp and comprehensive vision with ability of quick action (eagle). School administrators have a potential for an undisputed leadership (lion) recognized by everyone as well. This leadership potential takes on the responsibility for organizing the roles and responsibilities of each school community member (team builder), protecting their rights, along with the ability to fight challenges together with them (captain), as well as the responsibility of leading them to the target safely (pilot). Yet, the school administrator’s is a very important position holding risks that would not tolerate flaws. Seven different metaphors were expressed under the theme of “captain.” Two of these metaphors were mentioned by school administrators from Turkey and five by those in the U.S (see Table 5).

### **Comparing Turkey and the U.S.**

The majority of the metaphors falling under the theme of “captain” have been expressed by the U.S. school administrators. This difference between the two countries may be related to the difference in the definitions of the school administration profession in both countries. School administrators in the U.S. have been called “principal” (Ensign, 1923); particularly for the last 20 years, the school administration profession has been linked with the concept of “leadership,” and the majority of school administrators’ training programs have been organized within “educational leadership” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). In Turkey, on the other hand, school administration is considered civil service in 89% of the schools, and the school administrators are called “directors”. In addition, in Turkey, there is no requirement of completing a special educational program or being certified in order to become a school administrator (Başbakanlık, 1973). On the other hand, within the distinction that Hall and Hall describe, the low-context communication in the U.S, compared to the high-context communication in Turkey, may explain the

differences in school administrators' perception of duties. According to the Halls' (Hall & Hall, 1990) theory, interpersonal communication in the U.S. has to be more open and continuous because in low-context communication, messages are delivered in consideration of the addressee's preliminary information regarding the content of the messages. In such societies with low-context communication, each instance must be handled separately and comprehensively with targets and processes clearly re-discussed. This requires leaders to rebuild the process of defining a common vision as described in modern leadership theories. Yet, in high-context communication, the assumption that the receiver has preliminary information on the messages to be delivered prevails. This results in circumstances where a leadership skill, just to have the process running, will be adequate. Therefore, compared with those in the U.S., school administrators in Turkey are not expected to have the skill to build a common vision within the scope mentioned in modern leadership theories. Still, it is remarkable that participants from both countries mentioned the metaphors of lion, captain, and pilot. In both countries, school administrators are indisputable leaders recognized by everyone, and they are expected to have the skill to make healthy and right decisions in risky situations.

### **School Administration as Maestro**

Metaphors falling under the theme of "maestro" included those with positive associations about school administration and those that linked school administration with artistry. Thus, school administration is a position that requires sensitivity and attention to every moment, every decision, and every act. It requires focusing on tiny details when putting forward complex but wonderful creations (weaving rugs). School administrators are the people who work with utmost accuracy in order to turn rough materials into delicate artworks (carpenter) and keep building monumental artifacts in efforts and excitement for long years (architect). School administrators are masters with years of experience and mastery (headmaster). School administrators are artists (conductor) with sensitive skills of listening to and sensing others which hold the school community together in order to achieve school's targets and have them perform their duties in harmony, organization, and unison. Six different metaphors were expressed under the theme of "maestro." Two of these metaphors were mentioned by Turkish school administrators, and five were mentioned by the U.S. school administrators (see Table 6).

### **Comparing Turkey and the U.S.**

The majority of the metaphors falling under the theme of "maestro" were expressed by the U.S. school administrators. The difference between the two nations may be associated with the levels of progress and thus awareness and interest toward arts as well as socio-cultural differences mentioned in relation to other metaphors, differences in organization of the education systems, and the differences in the definitions of school administration. Interest toward arts in developed nations are more powerful compared with less-developed ones (Hagerty, 1999). Another reflection of the difference in progress is the difference in parents' expectations from the school administration. In

less-developed nations, expectations from the school administration are limited to the material needs on the lowest level, whereas in developed countries expectations become complicated and moral in relation to the content (Hofstede, 1986). This difference in expectations can be considered one of the reasons for the difference in school administrators' attitudes while performing their duties. Yet, it is remarkable that participants in both countries used metaphors such as "conductor" and "carpenter/weaving rugs." School administrators from both countries put forward the relationship between school administration and artistry.

## 6. Discussion

New candidates for school administration and those who have been school administrators for many years state that the job of a school administrator is learned through experience. Studies and analyses, on the other hand, put forth theories based on previous experiences. These theories are often inefficient in explaining the real responsibility a school administrator, skills s/he needs, and the changing situations from year to year and school to school. This research aimed at revealing the current picture of school administration through school administrators' statements. How do the school administrators define school administration in Turkey and the U.S.? What are the similar and different aspects of school administrators' metaphors associated with school administration in Turkey and the U.S.? Data collected for this study revealed the perception of school administration in Turkey and the U.S. in 2012.

The results of the research, found that 47 participants defined school administration through 43 different metaphors. Twenty-three of these metaphors reflected a positive perspective, 13 reflected a negative one, and 11 a neutral perspective. Metaphors were gathered under five different themes: porter (13 metaphors), firefighter (11 metaphors), father (10 metaphors), captain (7 metaphors), and maestro (6 metaphors). The school administrator as "porter" was an employee pressed under heavy responsibility but not authorized with rights. The school administrator was a "firefighter" and described as a man of struggle who is required to have countless abilities and skills at the same time. The school administrator as "father" is a devoted and compassionate protector. The school administrator as the "captain" is perceived as someone who can be a leader and give confidence through his/her foresight, prudence, and decisiveness to those around him/her. The school administrator as a "maestro" is an artist responsible for educating the future generations as the most valuable beings.

When these metaphors were considered, school administration, which can be sustained through altruism and diligence, was defined as a type of leadership requiring multi-level abilities and skills as well as a well-rounded personality. This definition aligned with Beck and Murphy's (1993) and Bredeson's (1985) perspectives of school administrators' roles in the 1990s. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), school administrators in the 1990s were leaders, servants, organizational architects, social architects, educators, moral agents, and people in the community. According to

Bredeson (1985), they needed to have purpose-maintenance, survival, and vision. All these roles were also revealed in this study. In order to understand why the demand for school administration is decreasing, it should be noted that school administrators perceived themselves as persons with no authority but much responsibility. Similarly, Linn, Sherman, and Gill (2007) stated that candidate school administrators considered school administration as (a) protection and nurturing, (b) skill, adventure, and problem solving, (c) challenge, risk and threat, and (d) chance and luck. Findings of this research support the findings of Linn et al.'s (2007) study.

In addition, beyond being learning organization catalysts (Senge et al., 1994), school administrators perceive that they are responsible for meeting a list of expectations. Besides the three basic qualities Cherry and Spiegel (2006) identified when they defined school administration in the 2000s (i.e., the touchstone: standard bearer and institutional anchor; the advocate: proponent of a cause beyond oneself; and the parent: everyone's icon of moral leadership), school administrators also believed they needed endless energy and creativity. The current research revealed that school administration was perceived similarly in Turkey and the U.S. Participants from the two countries used different metaphors that included similar associations. This reveals that both countries, school administrators take on similar responsibilities and roles. It is thought that this is associated with globalization, neo-liberal education policies within differing and similar social structures (Hesapçioğlu, 2001).

The most distinctive difference between the school administrators in the two countries was that school administrators from Turkey more unfavorably perceived their position. When the reasons for this was examined, it was observed that the structure of the education system in Turkey and the rights, authority, and responsibilities of school administration within this structure was imbalanced. Having to take on heavier responsibility without decent pay compared with teachers and holding limited authority, power, and initiatives due to the style of organization in education were factors. On the other hand, the high context communication in Turkey eliminated the expectation that school administrators need to have leadership qualities. Finally, in Turkey, where the power distance is higher, the distance between the school administrators and the school community keeps school administrators away from the culture of equal labor distribution as in teamwork. This, in return, results in individual responsibility of school administrators. The difference in the two countries is evident in the demands from the parents and society and the different groups of problems. In the U.S., material conditions, students' financial possibilities, and parents' socio-economic statuses are better compared with those in Turkey. Thus, school administrators in Turkey need to solve problems associated with finance in addition to issues of education.

Consequently, school administration is has similarities and differences from country to country. The similarities are in beliefs, values, abilities and skills, personalities, and views that school administrators should have. School administrators should be dedicated and diligent leaders who have well-rounded personalities in addition to multi-level abilities and skills. Attracting qualified candidates to this multi-level dynamic profession requiring dedication depends on eliminating the unfavorable moral and

professional conditions the current school administrators encounter. The first step to achieve this is would be to organize legal regulations that would increase school administrators' effectiveness. The most important regulation among these should be balancing the work load, income, responsibility, and authority in Turkey. In the U.S., the working hours should be reorganized and job protection should be provided. On the other hand, leadership programs that prepare school administration candidates for this challenging job in terms of knowledge and skills should develop new approaches to provide school administrators with moral and psychological readiness.

The current study, which aimed at analyzing Turkish and the U.S. school administrators' perceptions of school administration through metaphors, can be enriched with samples from different countries. Reasons for differences and similarities among countries may be put forward. In the light of these reasons, school administrator preparation programs, job description of school administrators, and their personal rights should be re-considered.



Table 1

*Metaphors School Administrators Used in Relation to School Administration*

Positive Metaphors		Negative Metaphors		Neutral Metaphors	
Metaphor	Country	Metaphor	Country	Metaphor	Country
1. Family	TR	1. Scapegoat	TR	1. Local market	TR
2. Father	TR	2. King without a sword in the middle of war	TR	2. Aspirin	TR
3. Altruistic	TR	3. Sheep	TR	3. Firefighter	US
4. Family	TR	4. Ostrich	TR	4. Zoo	US
5. Doctor	TR	5. Cow	TR	5. Roller coaster	US
6. Father	TR	6. Don Quixote	TR	6. Mediator	US
7. Challenge	US	7. I have the drum but my superiors have the drumstick	TR	7. Hard worker	US
8. Trustworthy	US	8. Shepherd	TR	8. Outreach	US
9. Dedicated	US	9. Hormuz with seven husbands	TR	9. All encompassing	US
10. Caring	US	10. Guard	TR	10. Swamp	US
11. Lion	TR	11. Orderly	TR	11. Juggling	US
12. Captain	TR	12. Porter	TR		
13. Plane	US	13. Panda	US		
14. Lion	US				
15. Team builder	US				
16. Visionary	US				
17. Eagle	US				
18. Conductor	TR				
19. Weaving rugs	TR				
20. Carpenter	US				
21. Conductor	US				
22. Architect	US				
23. Headmaster	US				

Table 2  
*Metaphors Used by Participants Viewing School Administrator as Porter*

TR (f:12)	US (f:1)
Ostrich Don Quixote King without a sword in the middle of a war Sheep Cow I have the drum but my superiors have the drumstick Shepherd Hormuz with seven husbands Guard Orderly Porter Scapegoat	Panda

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Table 3

*Metaphors Used by Participants Viewing School  
Administrator as Firefighter*

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TR (f:2)	US (f:9)
Aspirin	Firefighter
Local market	Zoo
	Roller coaster
	Mediator
	Hard worker
	Ostrich
	All encompassing
	Swamp
	Juggling

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Table 4

*Metaphors Used by Participants Viewing School Administrators as Fathers*

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TR (f:6)	US (f:4)
Physician	Challenge
Altruistic	Dedicated
Father (f:2)	Caring
Family (f:2)	Trustworthy

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Table 5  
*Metaphors Used by Participants Viewing School  
Administrators as Captain*

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TR (f:2)	US (f:5)
Lion	Lion
Captain	Plane/Pilot
	Team builder
	Visionary
	Eagle

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Table 6

*Metaphors Used by Participants Viewing School  
Administrators as Maestro*

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TR (f:2)	US (f:4)
Conductor	Maestro
Weaving rug	Carpenter
	Architect
	Headmaster

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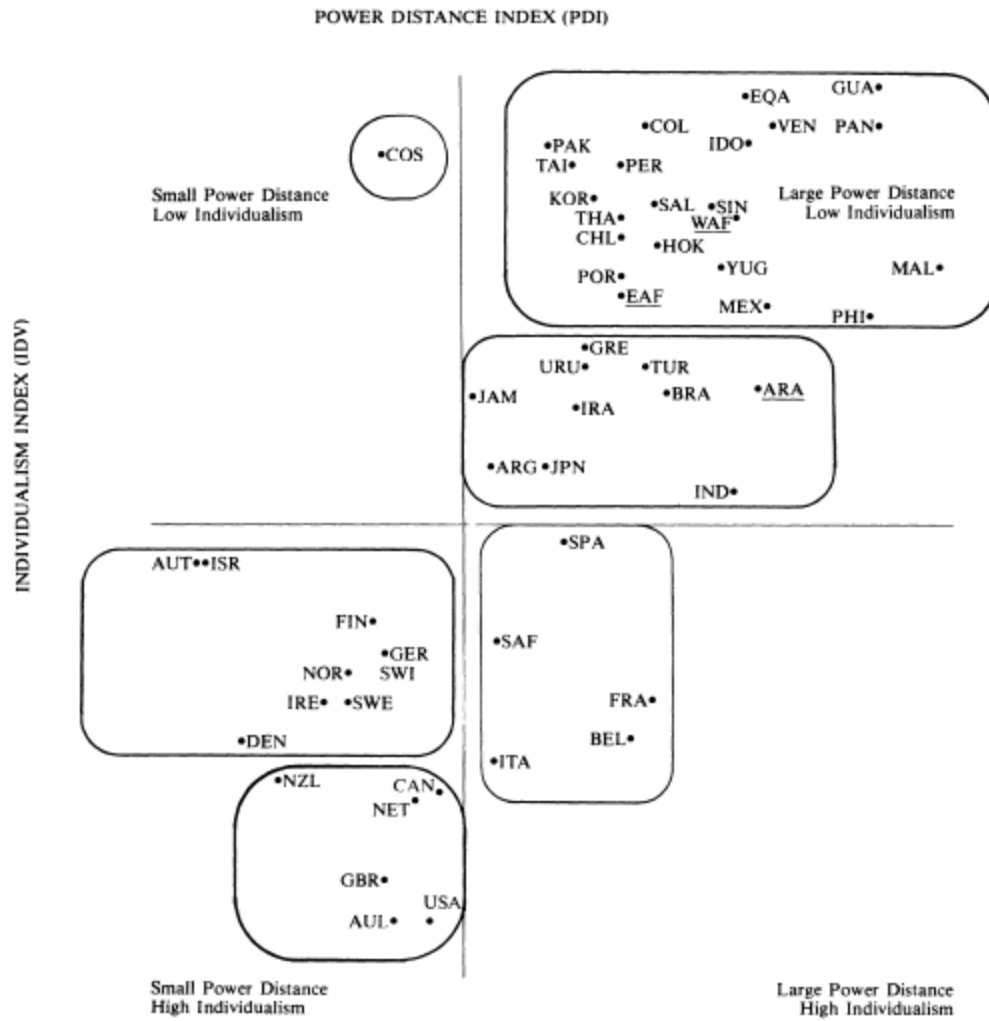


Figure 1. A Power Distance x Individualism/Collectivism Plot for Fifty Countries and Three Regions (Hofstede, 1986, p. 391).

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