Teachers’ views about ethical leadership behaviors of primary school directors

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out whether private and public primary schools directors show ethical behavior. In the research survey method was used. The data was collected with “Ethical Leadership Scale”. T-test was used for the analysis of data, the significance of data was found to be .05. The result of the study indicate that school and private primary school director display high ethical leadership behavior, mostly in communication dimension which is a sub-dimension of ethical leadership behaviors. Besides, it was found out that private school directors show more ethical leadership behavior than in all four sub-dimension of ethical behavior compared to public school directors.

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1. Introduction

For schools to be successful, they need to have directors with multi-dimensional leadership features. In research, it was found out that there is relation between leader type school leaders and the success of schools (Yavuz, 2006). In a study (Izgar et. al.) it was found out that there is a significant relation between leadership behavior and problem solving skills. A leader director would prevent the spoiling of the atmosphere in the school and increase the academic success of school much more faster by using his problem solving skills.

Making the school function in line with its aims is the duty of school management. For school directors to fulfill their responsibilities, they must know management processes, principles and rules very well and apply it (Bursaloglu, 2005). School directors are to display their knowledge of management processes. Schools are the institutions which bring up individuals in line with the culture, values and aims of the society they belong to. The basic aim of the schools is to bring up individuals who will protect the existence of the community, bring it to future, who have internalized change, and who are developer and idealist. Within this context, the primary aim of the schools is to change and develop student behaviors in line with the desires of the society. The realization of this
aim depends on modern teachers who have a vision and on effective leadership behaviors of school directors. Especially the behaviors of school managers are to set example for their inferiors and students.

Directors and leaders are of different characters. The aims of the directors stem from needs rather than desires. Director is to be superior in terms of dealing with conflicts between individuals or branch groups. S/he enables the fulfillment of daily activities by reconciliation of the sides (Zaleznik, 1999). Leadership is not tied to formal position, it is political, cultural and it is a process in which some spiritual features come forth (Erçetin, 2000). A leader uses his art and skill of impression and direction to realize the aims of an organization, as for director realizes the aims of an organization with positional and legal powers given to him/her.

Leader is the person who walks before the group of people and leads them. Although there are different views in terms of the exact role leaders play, this metaphor of leader as helmsman is still being used today (Vries, 2007). Being a leader means having power. For the realization of this, the action is to be done by the leader (Bowers, 2009). Leadership is considered to have an ability of impress others. Leaders with broad point of view and who can relate his experiences and learning to each other, who can build strategic architecture based on values and vision, who can see the routines others cannot see and who has the courage to decide and act fast, who can be the leader of an organization by impressing and inspiring others, who himself has a good command of technology, who can teach it to his inferiors and thus who improves them, who takes the dimension of humanity to the center of the organization are regarded as leaders to whom organizations will need in the future (Sezgin, 2007).

Leaders are expected to create of a vision to be shared, to develop a robust school culture, being leader who has adopted and internalized ethical values, get accepted to his institution are prominent leadership roles expected from the directors of future (Çelik, 2007). Schools are merely identified with their directors. The quality of a school is thought to be the same as its director. Riley and Mulford (2006) emphasize this in the following saying. “Three is a reality which no one can change; this is the fact that a good school always have a perfect director”.

With the passage of the world from industrial age to information age made the new forms of leadership to emerge. There is need for people who can manage the direction of change correctly and who will help the organization in this process. Besides, a leader must have ethical values, as well. These are the leaders who have individual ethical principles (Bowers, 2009).

Human relations form the basis for vocational education. The people who have the same occupation are to display some common patterns of behavior in their personal and occupational relations (Aydın, 2006). The principles of vocational ethic are the ones which are generally accepted by everyone and which have universal features and which are generally accepted to be true by everyone. It can be said that the director’s behaving according to vocational ethical principles has a prominent place in terms of the effectiveness of the school and the improvement of total quality (Erdoğan, 2007).

According to Hitt (1990: 1) ethics and leadership are entwined concepts. Therefore, a leader is responsible to prepare the principles or the norms which directs the behaviors of the people organization. This responsibility reflects the ethical leadership dimension of organization directors. This role has a very critical prominence for an effective leadership and long-term organizational success (Akt: Turhan, 2007).

It is necessary to develop a vision that will match with the educational philosophy of the country, to be equitable and built a balance among the rights of all groups. Making courage an indispensable part of the roles of educational manager, realization of a strong ethical leadership application with the integration of justice and ethical behaviors will prevent unethical behaviors of educational directors (Calabrese, 1989. Akt: Aydin, 2006). According to Aydin, the basis of ethical discussions is what makes human behaviours valuable or not. In this sense values being the determiner of the decision, behavior, attitude, opinion and preferences explains the relation between ethic-value relation (Aydın, 2006). Accordingly, it can be said that the background of one’s showing ethical behavior or not are values s/he has. According to Trevino and Youngblood (1990) individuals who have a strong system of values show ethical behaviors. In places where there is not a system of values non-ethical evions increase (Akt: Bowers, 2009). As management always requires decision making, there are some ethical principles of management. These ethical values are justice, honesty, objectivity, responsibility, human rights, human love, loyalty to the organization, superiority of law, tolerance, secularism, respect, prudence, democracy, positive human relations, clearance, rights and freedom and resistance to unlawful orders (Akt: Yılmaz, 2008). All of these ethical principles stem from the values of society where the organization is.

Moral values such as justice, equality, tolerance, objectivity, responsibility, honesty, humanism, love, respect, frankness, organisational loyalty, economy, positive humanistic relationships and staying away from immoral
behaviours such as selfishness, aggression, discrimination, favouritism, pressure-aggressiveness, harassment, gossiping, intimidating, exploitation, selfishness, neglect, illiberality, aggression, gossiping shows that the administrator has some positive personal characteristics. Moreover, such moral values as superiority of law, rights and freedoms, resistance to the illegal orders, and avoiding such immoral personal features as corruption, bribe, embezzlement, misusing authority and office show that an administrator is loyal to the law and the codes (Aydın, 2002; Erdoğan, 2007).

Whether the behaviours of the school administrator conform to universal moral values or not is affected by the value system, culture, beliefs and norm of the community. The source of the identification of moral behaviours are justice, human rights, pragmatism and individualism principles. Some special situations of schools and school administrations exist. Schools are organisations that form the culture of the community and transport it to prospective generations. Establishing a moral atmosphere at schools and the transmission of these values to the behaviours of school administrators and teachers positively positively affect. Therefore, the principal should be a model for teachers, students and other employees at school in terms of moral values as he should be in all other areas.

Moral values in school management are generally perceived as the behaviours of school administrators. Administrators’ exhibiting proper moral behaviours positively affects the atmosphere of the school organisation. In this study, comparing the state and private primary school administrators’ situation of showing moral leadership behaviours under the four subdimensions of moral leadership (climatic, davranınşsal, ethics in decision making and communicative). In the light of these aims, the answer for the following questions were looked for:

1. What is the extent to which primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviours according to teacher opinions?
2. According to teacher opinions, does the extent to which state and private primary school teachers show moral leadership behaviours change?

2. Method

This study was carried by using a survey model (Karasar, 2005). The population of the study consisted of totally 6878 teachers 529 of whom were private primary school teacher, 6349 of whom were state primary school teachers working within the borders of the municipality for the Konya province. Taking “4” as the acceptable error of deviation level, crosssample of the study was determined to be 522 persons. After completing the cross-sampling process, a simple random cross-sampling method was used to select the participants that were representative of all the teachers working within the borders of the municipality for the Konya province (Ural and Kılıç, 2005: 32). The scale was administered to 522 teachers and 513 of these scales were returned. Since 9 per cent of the scales (52) were partially completed, 504 scales, 91 of these being from private schools and 413 of them being from state schools, were evaluated. In the study, in order to determine the extent to which the directors at private and state primary schools possess the moral leadership behaviour, the Moral Leadership Scale developed by Yılmaz (2006) was used. Moreover, a nine-item information form was produced to collect data about such characteristics of teachers and administrators as sex, educational background, and the length of service. There are four factors in the Moral Leadership Scale of Yılmaz (2006). The total variance is 61,139 %. The first factor accounts for the 21,525 % (Eigen value: 8,302), the second factor does the 14,208 % (Eigen value: 5,480), the third factor 14,638 % (Eigen value: 4,165) and the fourth factor 10,798 % (Eigen value: 5,646). The Cronbach alpha value of the scale was .97. The Cronbach alpha levels for the four subcategories were as follows: communicative ethics .95; climatic ethics .92; ethics of decision making .94 and behavioral ethics .90. For all dimension of the scale, the item-test correlation (Item-total) varies between 0,676 and 0,863. By the same token, the correlation for item-remaining was between 0,588 and 0,825. These two correlation values that belong to each item of the scale are an indication of internal validity of the overall scale and the subsections (Yılmaz, 2006:3). T-test and other statistical techniques are used to make the analyses related to the extent to which the administrators of state and private primary schools possess the moral leadership behaviour in relation to teacher opinions and teacher age groups. The analyses were carried out by SPSS 16.0 Statistical Package and p<.05 was accepted as the meaning level.
3. Results (Findings) and Discussion

1. What is the extent to which primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviours according to teacher opinions?

Table-1: The average values for the extent to which primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviours according to teacher opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climatic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>47.69</td>
<td>8.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morales in Decision Making</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>37.66</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>57.71</td>
<td>9.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The administrators of state and private primary schools got $X = 47.69$ in the climatic dimension; $X = 37.13$ in the behavioural dimension; $X = 37.66$ in decision making and $X = 57.71$ in the communicative dimension on the average. When the average values for these sub-problems are analysed, state and private primary school administrators got scores above the average in all four dimensions of moral leadership. Concluding from these values, it is understood that state and private primary school administrators exhibit high levels of moral leadership behaviours. In a research related to the moral leadership roles of primary and high school administrators, it was seen that the level of exhibiting the moral leadership behaviours of primary school teacher was at the level of “I agree” (Karagöz, 2008). It is seen that primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviours in the communicative dimension most among the four subdimensions. In a research concerned with the analysis of the extent to which primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviours in terms of various variables, it was seen that primary school administrators show moral leadership behaviours in the communicative dimension most. As a result, it can be said that primary school administrators exhibit high levels of moral leadership behaviours.

2- According to teacher opinions, does the extent to which state and private primary school teachers show moral leadership behaviours change?

Table-2: According to teacher opinions, the t-test results for the the extent to which state and private primary school teachers show moral leadership behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subdimensions</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climatic</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>47.32</td>
<td>8.98</td>
<td>-2.12</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morales in Decision Making</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>36.69</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>40.29</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in the table were analysed in four dimensions: climatic, behavioural, ethics in decision making, and communicative. In the climatic dimension, when the state and private primary school administrators’ average scores based on school type are examined, it is seen that the average score for the state primary school administrators is $X = 47.32$ and the score for private primary school administrators is $X = 49.37$. In the analysis done to test whether the difference between the average values in the climatic dimension was meaningful or not, as a result of the comparison of the two values, it was seen that the difference was meaningful in favour of private primary school teachers $(t(502)=-2.12; p<.05)$. In the behavioural dimension, when the average scores of the state and private primary school teachers in terms of the behavioural dimension and school type were examined, the average score was found to be $X = 36.69$ for state primary school administrators, and $X = 39.1$ for private primary school administrators. In the communicative dimension, when the average scores for the state and private primary school
administrators in terms of school type are examined. In the analysis done by comparing two average scores to test whether the difference between the average values in the behavioral dimension was meaningful or not, it was seen that there was a meaningful difference ($t(502)=-3.47; \, p<.05$) in favor of private primary school teachers. In the ethics of decision making dimension, when the average scores of the state and private primary school teachers in terms of the ethics of decision making dimension and school type were examined, the average score was found to be $X=37.08$ for state primary school administrators, and $X=40.29$ for private primary school administrators. In the analysis done by comparing two average scores to test whether the difference between the average values in the behavioral dimension was meaningful or not, it was seen that there was a meaningful difference ($t(502)=-5.08; \, p<.05$) in favor of private primary school teachers. In the communicative dimension, the average score for the state primary school administrators was $X=56.78$, while it was $X=61.92$ for the private primary school administrators. In the analysis done by comparing two average scores to test whether the difference between the average values in terms of school type was meaningful or not, it was seen that there was a meaningful difference ($t(502)=-4.69; \, p<0.05$) in favor of private primary school teachers.

When the average scores of the state and private primary school teachers in terms of the behavioral dimension and school type were examined, it was seen that there was a meaningful difference for all four dimensions in favor of the private primary schools. According to these results, it can be said that administrators of private primary schools, when compared to those of state primary schools, exhibit more moral leadership behaviors. The greatest difference exists in the communicative dimension in favor of private primary school administrators. Here, it can be concluded that private primary school administrators are in effective contact with their teachers. Since private primary school teachers and administrators are willing to work cooperatively by taking common decisions and teachers’ higher level of participation in management decisions may have improved how they viewed their administrators. In a study on the views of teachers and administrators about the participation of the teachers in private and state primary schools in management through the decisions taken by the board of teachers, it was seen that the average scores for the participation of teachers and administrators working in private schools in the management through the decisions taken by the board of teachers were meaningfully higher than those of the teachers and administrators working in state schools (Dengiz, 2007). According to a study carried out by Çelik (2006), in a study that is concerned with examining the level of effectiveness administration and leader behaviors of the administrators working in private primary schools, it was seen that the level of effectiveness administration and leadership behaviors of the administrators working in private primary schools was higher in exhibiting the leadership role, increasing productivity and success, decision-making in solving problems because of the physical situation and economic conditions of the school, and the authority of the administrators. According to the study, private primary school administrators who have the authority to renew contracts, when compared to state primary school administrators, more explicitly exhibit the characteristics of administration and leadership. Private primary school administrators’ freely taking action enables them to have more effective qualities of administration and leadership. Moreover, because of such reasons as the higher levels of participation in management among the teachers in private primary schools when compared to their colleagues in state schools, the administrators’ having more authority and responsibilities, the existence of more opportunities for private schools and the notion of rivalry between the private schools, it can be thought that the leaders of private primary schools exhibit more leadership behaviors, and especially more moral leadership behaviors. The selection of private primary school teachers and administrators and their existence in the institution largely depends on professional success, and so depending on the administration, while the selection and existence of the administrators and teachers in state schools depend on the basis of posts.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

1- According to the findings gained, primary school principals got scores above the average in all four dimensions. It was clear from these results that primary school principals exhibit high levels of moral leadership behaviour in all four dimensions of moral leadership and that they showed moral leadership behaviour in the communicative dimension most among the four dimensions.

2- When teacher perceptions concerned with the extent to which private and state primary school administrators exhibit moral leadership behaviors were examined, it was seen that there is a meaningful difference in favor of private school for all of the dimensions (climatic, behavioral, morals in decision making and communicative).
According to this result, it was found out that private primary school administrators were more successful in exhibiting moral leadership behaviours when compared to those of state primary schools. In the light of the results gained, the following suggestions can be made:

1- Primary school administrators should be given the opportunity to take part in such activities as seminars, conferences at times to enable them to exhibit higher level moral leadership behaviours. Especially, those activities that develop the ability of exhibiting moral leadership behaviours in the behavioural dimension should be prioritized.

2- The reasons for why state and private primary school teachers differentiate in exhibiting moral leadership behaviours can be researched.

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