




School Administrators' Views on the Curricula in the Context of Effective School Management and Instructional Leadership

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the school administrators' views on the curricula in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership.

Method: This study employed a qualitative approach to examine the school administrators' views on the curricula in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen school administrators from two provinces, Çanakkale and Muğla, located in west of Türkiye. Participants were selected by using convenience sampling.

Findings: In this study, school administrators stated that the curricula should be student-centered, skill-oriented, up-to-date, and functional; they also emphasized that it should not be frequently revised and should avoid reliance on rote learning. The current curricula implemented in Türkiye was described as intensive, centralized, disregarding individual differences, and lacking real-life relevance. Additionally, administrators highlighted that having knowledge of the curricula contributes to the effective operation of schools, supports teachers, and serves as a key factor in improving the quality of education.

Implications: This study has revealed that there some points that need improvement in school administrators' curricula knowledge. In-service training programs are recommended to address this development. Familiarity with all curricula will contribute to their effectiveness as school leaders and enhance their instructional leadership skills, thereby improving the quality of education. Additionally, considering the views of school administrators during curricula development processes will contribute to shaping the education system more effectively.

Keywords

school administrators, curricula, effective school management, instructional leadership.

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Introduction

Effective management skills of school administrators are the main elements that directly affect the effectiveness of schools. These skills include leadership, problem-solving, decision making, strategic planning, time management, stress management and curricula implementation support at schools (Alvarez Contreras et al., 2023; López-Fernández & Fernández, 2024; Thakur, 2024). These skills enable school administrators to be accepted as leaders (Katz & Kahn, 1977; Eren, 2000). Daleware University, Faculty of Education Department, Administrator Standards Advisory Board (1998) published criteria for effective school administrators. These criteria include the subjects of qualified education, academic success and well-being of students. According to these criteria, one of the main duties of school administrators is to implement practices that enhance the professional qualifications of teachers. Additionally, they are responsible for supporting curricula implementation at school, teaching and evaluation processes. In the context of school effectiveness, it is important to establish a professional community among teachers and other staff. The establishment of this community can be achieved by enhancing communication, promoting collaboration, developing teamwork, and setting a positive example.

In order to ensure effectiveness, instructional leadership processes are important for schools. Instructional leadership processes emphasize the importance of improving teacher performance and student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Instructional leadership aims monitoring the curricula implementation, supporting teachers, developing instructional strategies, providing coaching, and giving feedback. This type of leadership has been shown to be effective in enhancing teacher efficacy, supporting the professional development of educators, and improving student learning outcomes (Dede et al., 2018; Yusof, 2019). Within the context of instructional leadership practices, fostering a culture of continuous learning, promoting collaborative work environments, and supporting shared decision-making processes are considered essential components (Kilag & Sasan, 2023). Studies indicate that the learning taking place in schools is influenced by both the leadership approaches of school administrators and instructional practices within classrooms (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; OECD, 2008). It is also stated that providing continuous professional development and support to teachers and students contributes to their personal and professional growth. Moreover, this support offers opportunities for lifelong learning. This is also important in meeting their learning needs. (Kilag & Sasan, 2023).

Meeting the learning needs of students to a great extent is accepted as one of the duties of effective school administrators (Owens & Valensky, 2021). Administrators are not expected to influence teaching and learning activities in the classroom directly. The aim is to support teaching by providing positive education and training services in the background indirectly. Thus, it is clear that effective school administrators are accepted as instructional leaders (Balci, 2017).

The fact that effective school administrators serve as instructional leaders highlights the necessity of their possessing curricula knowledge. Curricula guidance by school administrators is one of the areas that significantly impacts school performance. These guidance roles give them the responsibility of directing school staff in line with the goals and objectives of the organization. Effective school administrators affect the success of school indirectly. They can

affect teachers and educational activities by standing at the background as instructional leaders. (He et al., 2024).

The curricula knowledge of school administrators is critically important both for effectively fulfilling their roles as instructional leaders and for enhancing the overall success of the school. Curricula can be defined as the most efficient and important instrument to help educational organizations achieve their goals (Paulsrud & Wermke, 2019). It is a process by which the goals and the sequence of all educational activities conducted in schools (Walker, 2003). Curricula is defined as the educational guidance created and implemented for the educational purpose. School administrators are largely responsible for making sure that curricula is implemented effectively in schools (Ornstein, 2007). Curricula knowledge of school administrators is accepted a significant variable in this context.

Curricula knowledge is important for school administrators as well as teachers. Teachers are the main implementers of the curricula in classrooms, and school administrators ensure the adequacy and supervision of the implementation. The harmony of both elements is a factor that will increase the quality of the official curricula (Aslan & Gürlen, 2019; Bolat, 2021; Çetinkaya & Tabak, 2019;). The implementation of curricula in schools is under the supervision and control of school administrators. Effective school administrators need to possess the administration, information technology, communication, technical, and theoretical competencies required by the 21st century (İra & Aygün, 2023). Because school administrators influence educational processes and their efficiency indirectly (Girgin & Tofur, 2023). Effective school administrators play a fundamental role in the successful implementation of the curricula. The administrative structures of school systems and the educational decisions made by school leaders directly shape the content of instructional programs and in-class teaching processes. In this context, school administrators are strategic actors who connect schools with central administrative bodies and guide implementation processes. Through this administrative linkage, schools operate in alignment with the standards and regulations set by central authorities. This connection influences how the curricula are implemented. Therefore, aligning educational policies with school-level curricula goals emerges as a critical factor in enhancing the quality of instruction and improving overall educational outcomes (Wermke et al., 2023).

The views of school administrators about the curricula are important for schools in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership. The ideal perspective of school administrators regarding curricula encompasses multiple dimensions, including adherence to the country's curricula standards, assuming an instructional leadership role for teachers and students, providing guidance and support to teachers throughout curricula processes, and strengthening engagement with the school community. Administrators who adopt this comprehensive approach are likely to make significant contributions to the improvement of educational quality (Steven, 2023).

Instructional leaders should have the ability of curricula literacy as they are responsible of curricula implementation at schools. Curricula literacy refers to the knowledge and skills educators require to understand, evaluate, and implement curricula effectively. It encompasses familiarity with content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methods, enabling teachers to align instruction with learning objectives (İleritürk, 2024). Recent educational reforms highlight the importance of curricula literacy, urging teachers to critically engage with curricular materials and adapt them to diverse learner needs and local contexts. By fostering

this competence, educators can enhance teaching practices and improve educational outcomes (Marek et al., 2024).

In school management processes, the knowledge base of administrators regarding to curricula literacy is gaining importance. Because they implement, supervise, lead, or hold administrative responsibilities within school organizations where the curricula are carried out. In this context, it is crucial for school administrators not only to manage their schools effectively. Not only should they demonstrate instructional leadership skills, but also possess curricula knowledge. If administrators fail to improve the organization's performance, they are accepted the first person to be held accountable for the failure (Mücevher & Erdem, 2019). Wright and Renihan (2003) emphasize that administrators need to have a high level of knowledge and awareness of the curricula in order to lead a school effectively.

A review of the literature reveals that research on this subject is limited. So, this study is important for examining the views of school administrators on curricula. This study will analyze 16 school administrators' (from Çanakkale and Muğla) views on curricula implementation at schools, the sufficiency of the implemented programs, and the challenges encountered during implementation. Additionally, it will identify the sufficiency of the school administrators' knowledge about the curricula, the sources they use to acquire and update their knowledge, and the strategies they develop to address challenges. Based on the knowledge of the 16 participant school administrators, their views on the strategies developed to overcome challenges, and their impact on instructional processes and student achievement will be identified. For this purpose, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the views of school administrators regarding the general functioning of curricula? What are their opinions about the importance of the curricula?
2. What are the views of school administrators on the sufficiency of the curricula implemented in Türkiye?
3. Do school administrators have enough knowledge about curricula? Which sources (such as universities, academic literature, in-service training, etc.) do they use to acquire this knowledge?
4. What type of problems do school administrators encounter during curricula implementation? What kind of strategies do they use to solve these problems? Do they have any support?
5. Why is it important for school administrators to have knowledge about curricula? Are there any contributions of this knowledge for school management, instructional processes of school and student success?

Method

The qualitative method was used in the design of this study, which aims to examine the current competencies of school administrators in curricula knowledge. The data was collected by using a semi-structured interview form. These kinds of forms have open-ended formats with no predetermined answers (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Although the study adopts a phenomenological design, its focus is not solely on capturing lived experiences in the strict sense proposed by van Manen (1990), but rather on understanding administrators' perceptions and interpretations of curricula as they relate to school leadership and management. In this context, the study aligns more closely with the descriptive phenomenological approach, which allows for the inclusion of participants' expressed views and reflections as legitimate data sources (Giorgi, 2009). While gathering data for a phenomenological study, the goal is to speak with people who will be representative of the phenomenon being studied. The aim is to highlight the "viewpoints" of individuals on the research phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). So, we aim to analyze the views of school administrators about the curricula in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership. The participants' views and experiences were analyzed in-depth and are presented as directly as possible, in accordance with the principles of phenomenological inquiry.

Participants

Sixteen school administrators from the provinces of two cities located in west of Türkiye make up the study group for this research. Convenience sampling is one of the non-probability sampling method techniques, was employed to choose the study group. So, the convenience sampling method was chosen in order to reach the school administrators who can give related answers with the research questions of the study (Korkmaz, 2020). The participants were chosen on a voluntary basis. The participants for this research are shown in Table 1 based on the following variables: gender, age, field, educational status, professional seniority, administrative seniority, type of duty, and type of school.

Table 1 displays the total number of participants, which consists of 8 assistant school administrators and 8 school administrators. Thirteen of the participants fall within the 36–45 age range, while three are in the 46–55 age range. There were six postgraduate (master's and doctorate) graduates and ten undergraduates among the participants. Before becoming administrators, five of the participants were branch teachers, and eleven of the participants were classroom teachers. Six school administrators have more than 16 years of experience, while 10 school administrators have between 11 and 15 years of experience, according to the participants' professional seniority. In addition, the administrative seniority of three participants is between one and five years, that of four is between six and ten years, that of seven is between eleven and fifteen years, and that of two is greater than sixteen years. Upon analyzing the type of school, it becomes evident that one participant held an administrative position in a kindergarten, ten in a primary school, two in a secondary school, and three in a high school.

Table 1
Demographic Information of School Administrators

Demographic information		n
Gender	Woman	3
	Man	13
Age	22-35	-
	36-45	13
	46-55	3
	56+	-
Educational status	Bachelor's Degree	10
	Post graduate	6
Field	Primary school teachers	11
	Branch	5
Professional seniority	1-5 years	-
	6-10 years	-
	11-15 years	10
	16+ years	6
Administrative seniority	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	4
	11-15 years	7
	16+ years	2
Type of duty	Deputy Administrator	8
	Administrator	8
	Kindergarden	1
Type of school	Primary School	10
	Elementary School	2
	High School	3
Total		16

Data Collection Tool

"By addressing similar issues, the interview form is prepared to obtain the same type of information from different people" (Patton, 1987). The researchers developed a semi-structured interview form in order to get information from different participants about the school administrators' views about the curricula in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership. The interview form was prepared carefully to ensure its internal and external validity. Before the form was developed, the literature in the fields of educational administration, and curricula were reviewed in order to ensure high validity of the form. After review, researchers prepared the semi-structured interview form. Two experts in the fields of educational administration, and two experts in the field of curricula examined the interview form. Then two school administrators were chosen to test the interview questions whether they were clear enough or not. Finally, the form was examined in order to meet the required arrangements. At the end, five questions were ready in order to collect the study's qualitative data. The questions are as follows:

1. What do you think about general functioning of curricula? What do you think about its importance in the learning process?

2. What do you think about the sufficiency of the curricula which is implemented in Türkiye?
3. Do you think that you have sufficient knowledge about curricula? What kind of sources do you use to gather information? (Literature, academic institutions, in-service training, etc.)
4. What kind of problems do you encounter while the teachers implement the curricula in your school? What kind of strategies do you use to solve these problems? Do they have any support to solve these problems?
5. Do you think school administrators should have knowledge about the curricula? Which areas do you think this information will be most helpful?

Before data collection, approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University with the reference number E-84026528-050.99-2400096958 on April 5, 2024. At the beginning of the interviews, the objectives and ethical rights were explained to the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded in written form. These records were presented to the participants for review and their approval was obtained.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form was used to obtain the views of school administrators about the curricula in the context of effective school management and instructional leadership. This form was applied in the spring term of the 2023-2024 academic year.

Before the interview, the purpose of the research was explained to the participants, and they were informed that their personal information would be used only for research purposes and would not be shared with third parties. All interviews were noted down with the permission. The participants read and approved the transcriptions. The duration of the interviews was 25 to 45 minutes. Probing questions were used in the interview to get the participants' views. "Where did you get this information?" "What are your opinions on this subject?" and "What kind of support do you receive?" were some of the questions that were asked.

The method of the study consists of a descriptive analysis of the school administrators' views on curricula implementation at schools, the sufficiency of the implemented programs, the challenges encountered during implementation, identification of the sufficiency of the school administrators' knowledge about the curricula, the sources they use to acquire and update their knowledge, and the strategies they develop to address challenges. In this qualitative research, comparing codes and ensuring inter-coder reliability are crucial for enhancing the reliability of the study (Creswell, 2016). In this study, meaningful segments were identified within the data, and the researchers performed the coding process by assigning labels to these segments. The coding process involved breaking the data into parts, thoroughly examining each part, making comparisons, constructing concepts, and establishing relationships. The data subjected to descriptive analysis were initially analyzed by the researchers, and the first coding phase was completed. Subsequently, the coding process was repeated in collaboration with an expert faculty member, and the consistency between the two coding sets was assessed. Afterwards, the codes obtained from the descriptive analysis were grouped under related categories, and the

categories for the study were formed. In-depth examination of these categories led to the identification of themes that aligned with the research questions. These themes provided valuable insights into the different dimensions of the research problem (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

In order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings, the participants' own statements and impressive opinions were frequently included. While analysing the data, school administrators were coded as [A(1), A(2), ..., A(16)]. Because personal data is confidential, their personal information was not mentioned. The results of related research and the literature review were taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Findings

School Administrators' Views on Curricula and Its Importance

Table 2 displays the school administrators' views on curricula and its importance.

Table 2

School Administrators' Views on Curricula and on Its Importance

Curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be student-centered Should not be overloaded Should be skill-oriented Should be more taken into account by parents Current curricula is insufficient Need to be up to date Need to be functional Should not lead to rote memorization Need to teach skills to students Should be school-based Should not be changed too often Should address the student needs Should be the basis of education
Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influences textbooks Impacts training and education procedures A road map Ensures unity in education

The school administrators express their views about the curricula as follows: the current curricula should be student-centered, skill-oriented, up-to-date, and functional; teach skills to students; it should be up-to-date and away from rote memorization; it should be school-based and functional; the changes shouldn't be occurred often; it needs to be considered as the basis of education; it should address the student needs. School administrators express their opinions that the curricula is a road map, it provides unity in education, and it affects textbooks and education/training processes, as for the importance of curricula in educational processes. Some of the participants' views are given below:

A1: "...the curricula should be student-centered. The content is intense. It should be simplified. The subject should be really general and skill-orientated. It seems very disconnected from the real life."

A9: "Updating is acceptable, but the constant change of curricula causes problems."

School Administrators' Views on the Curricula Being Implemented in Türkiye

Table 3 presents school administrators' views about the curricula implemented in Türkiye.

Table 3

The Curricula Being Implemented in Türkiye

The curricula in Türkiye	Incompatible with school operations
	Intense
	Inadequate for the general aims of the educational system
	Adequate for the general aims of the educational system
	Irrelevant to real life
	Inclusive
	Does not support the growth of the students
	Frequent changes are challenging
	Does not support teachers to update their knowledge
	Not leading students to success
	Should be well-prepared
	The centralized curricula does not work well for all regions
	Personal differences are ignored
	Relies on rote memorization
	Has some ideological features

As can be seen in Table 3, the participants report the following views about the curricula being implemented in Türkiye: it is incompatible with the school operations, intense, inadequate for the general aims of the educational system, adequate for the general aims of the educational system, irrelevant to real life, inclusive, does not support the growth of the students. They also state that the frequent changes in curricula are challenging and it does not support teachers to update their knowledge.

School administrators think that the education curricula is inadequate, using rote memorization, ideological, and does not lead students to success. They also state that the preparation processes of the curricula should be kept long, the centralized curricula does not work for all regions, personal differences are ignored, relies on rote memorization, has some ideological features. Some of the participants' views are given below:

A1: "All cities and regions receive the same content. I think this situation causes individual differences, demands and requirements to be ignored."

A12: "It is inadequate even in giving basic skills. In other model countries, students are primarily taught the basic skills they should have as human beings. In our curricula, the focus is on academic success and rote memorizing."

School Administrators' Knowledge of Curricula

Table 4 lists the school administrators' views regarding to their knowledge.

Table 4

The Knowledge and Information Sources of School Administrators of Curricula

Knowledge of curricula	I have enough knowledge I need to improve my knowledge I am only good enough in my own field
Information sources	Education-related websites Experience The experiences of colleagues Official regulations Bachelor's degree education Postgraduate education In-service training Literature Observations of schools abroad

Participants think that their knowledge of the curricula is sufficient but still needs to be improved. And they list their information sources as education-related websites, their own experiences, the experiences of colleagues, official regulations, bachelor's degree education, postgraduate education, in-service training, literature, observations of schools abroad. Some of the participants' views are given below:

A6: "Yes, my knowledge is sufficient, because I read and do research. I follow the latest news all the time. I even read newspaper columns and articles."

A16: "I don't think it is sufficient. I got the information about the curricula from the university and in-service trainings."

Issues of the Curricula Implementation Process and Possible Solutions Provided by School Administrators

Table 5 displays the issues that school administrators encountered while the teachers implementing curricula in their schools and their possible solutions.

Table 5

Issues with the Curricula Implementation Process and Possible Solutions Provided by School Administrators

Issues	Student absenteeism Students' poor academic performance The centralized curricula does not work well for all regions Process for evaluating teachers is insufficient Insufficient time for the implementation The inadequate quality of learning environments Teachers' lack of knowledge of curricula Financial problems of schools Pressure from parents Parents' indifference on students Disrespect to the teaching profession Elective/obligatory courses Curricula is irrelevant to real life Intensity of the curricula Low-level of curricula (for kindergarten)
Possible solutions	No solutions were proposed

The participants' views of teachers' curricula implementation in their schools are given as the following: students' poor academic performance, student absenteeism, the centralized curricula does not work for all regions, process for evaluating teachers is insufficient, insufficient time for the implementation, the inadequate quality of learning environments, teachers' lack of knowledge of curricula, financial problems of schools, pressure from parents, parents' indifference on students, disrespect to the teaching profession, elective/obligatory courses, curricula is irrelevant to real life, intensity of the curricula, low-level of curricula (for kindergarten).

A2: "I can say that student or teacher qualifications are not suitable for the curricula. I think it is a problem. We have a curricula, but is the teacher qualified to implement this? Or does the curricula address the needs of students? I don't think anyone concerns about it."

A14: "Schools are not given autonomy in the implementation of the curricula. This situation causes incompatibility between the curricula and implementation."

The Necessity of School Administrators to Have Knowledge about the Curricula and Its Contributions for Them

Table 6 lists the responses to the question of whether curricula knowledge is required of school administrators and the areas in which it can be useful.

Table 6

The Necessity for School Administrators to Have Knowledge about The Curricula and in which Areas this Knowledge Can Contribute

Administrators' views for the curricula knowledge	Administrators need to know curricula Administrators need knowledge according to the type of schools they work Teachers should be more knowledgeable It is not required for administrators to be familiar with the curricula
Contributions	Contribution to the school's operations (planning, implementing curricula, supervision, gaining proficiency) Strengthening the morale and motivation of teachers Support for the academic achievement of students Contribution to a good communication with parents Providing guidance when a teacher encounters challenges Contribution to increasing the standard of education Facilitating assessment of end-of-year achievement Helps to find solutions to the problems Contribution to increasing self prestige No contribution at all

When Table 6 is analyzed, school administrators' responses that curricula knowledge is essential and should vary depending on the type of schools. Some say that teachers need to have curricula knowledge rather than school administrators. They say that their knowledge in educational curricula could be useful in contribution to the school's operations (planning, implementing curricula, supervision, gaining proficiency), strengthening the morale and motivation of teachers, support for the academic achievement of students, contribution to a good

communication with parents, providing guidance when a teacher encounters challenges, contribution to increasing the standard of education, facilitating assessment of end-of-year achievement, helping to find solutions to the problems, contribution to increasing self prestige. And some of them say that knowing about curricula has no contribution for them. Some of the participants' views are given below:

A8: "Yes, it is crucial. I believe it will help pupils to succeed academically. Exam results will be better. Children will be able to learn better. I think teachers will be able to implement curricula better."

A15: "I believe that we need to be familiar with curricula, of course. This is necessary in order to be a good manager and a good leader."

Discussion and Conclusion

The fact that the majority of participants are between the ages of 36–45 and have more than 11 years of professional experience indicates that they possess both teaching and administrative experience. This background may influence their ability to recognize problems encountered during curricula implementation and to develop appropriate solutions. Additionally, six participants have completed postgraduate education, which is a significant variable in evaluating their level of curricula knowledge and how they acquire it. It can be expected that administrators with postgraduate education are more likely to consult academic sources.

The types of schools in which the participants work are also closely related to curricula implementation. For example, since the structure and implementation of curricula differ between early childhood education and high school levels, the problems encountered by administrators and their responses to these problems may also vary. Therefore, participant characteristics serve not only a descriptive purpose but also play an explanatory role in addressing the research problem.

The study's results indicate that school administrators who work in the provinces of two western cities in Türkiye (Çanakkale and Muğla) generally consider the curricula as 'inadequate', 'based on rote memorisation rather than skills teaching', 'too intensive' and 'dysfunctional'. School administrators express their discomfort with the frequent curricula changes by government, and say that the interest/information of parents as to the curricula to be low. Judijanto et al. (2024) state in their research that the rigid curricula structure, which often 'fails to align with the demands of the 21st century' and 'lacks flexibility', 'proves insufficient in fostering students' cognitive development and creativity'. This situation leads to the neglect of individual differences and 21st-century skills, consequently hindering students from fully realizing their potential. The administrators' opinions align with the findings of Özaydınlı's (2023) study. In this study, opinions regarding the current curricula was gathered from twelve professors, twelve associate professors, sixteen assistant professors, and eight research assistants. The administrators in this study share similar views with those of being "inconsistent", "far from serving the purpose/not orientated to the need", and "constantly/quickly changing".

Participants address the importance of the curricula from different perspectives. Administrators regard curricula as essential components of the educational processes. They view curricula not only as road maps and guiding frameworks for instructional activities, but also as tools that shape the content of textbooks and structure educational practices. Moreover, curricula is seen

as mechanisms for ensuring consistency and unity across educational processes. In Aydın and Tan Şişman's (2021) study, teachers were asked about their views on the necessity of curricula, and the findings revealed that they expressed similar opinions on its importance. Among the 228 teachers who participated in the study, 114 stated that they considered the curricula is essential for planning educational processes systematically. Additionally, 67 teachers emphasized that the curricula is important in maintaining standardized implementation across the country. Smith and Andrews (1989) argue that most of the competencies shared by educational administrators and leaders are closely related to curricula management.

School administrators' views on the curricula implemented in Türkiye align with the findings of Can (2007) and Yeşilyurt (2019) regarding the sufficiency of the curricula. The participants emphasize that teachers should be well-versed in the curricula; however, they also express concerns about its effectiveness in enhancing student success. They note that the curricula is often misaligned with the actual functioning of schools, lacks relevance to real-life situations, and is insufficient in terms of content. Furthermore, they argue that the centralized nature of curricula development by the Ministry of Education prevents it from addressing local needs sufficiently. Participants from both provinces particularly highlight the curricula's limited responsiveness to local contexts, underscoring the importance of allowing greater flexibility and adaptation. A key issue in curricula development studies in our country is the highly centralized approach, where curricula are designed and decisions are made exclusively at the national level. In the article comparing the curricula of Türkiye and the United States, Keskinçilç Yumuşak (2022) highlights that Türkiye has a centralized education system where the Ministry of National Education controls curricula decisions. As a result, national curricula documents are less detailed. In contrast, the United States follows a more decentralized approach, producing more detailed and diverse curricula documents. A review of OECD education systems indicates that countries demonstrating high performance in PISA assessments tend to adopt decentralized governance structures, which play a significant role in shaping educational processes. This suggests that these countries design their curricula in response to the diverse learning needs of students, which in turn contributes to their high levels of academic achievement. Indeed, teachers have significant autonomy in selecting textbooks, determining course content, and utilizing instructional materials in these countries. In this context, it can be stated that teachers develop classroom-specific curricula by taking into account the classroom atmosphere, learning needs, potential learning barriers, and assessment factors (Bakioğlu & Elverici, 2020; Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2020). This autonomy emerges as a significant factor in enhancing student achievement and represents a key point of distinction from the Turkish education system.

It is noteworthy that the participants felt that their knowledge of the curricula was sufficient; however, they emphasized that, specifically, their knowledge of their own branches was more sufficient. This finding is line with many other studies in the literature. In these studies (Aslan & Gürlen, 2019; Atlı et al., 2021; Çetinkaya & Tabak, 2019; Demir & Toraman, 2021), school administrators perceive their knowledge of the curricula as sufficient. However, the literature also includes the study by Aygün and Taşdan (2023), which specifically examines school administrators' perspectives on curricula knowledge. In that study, only one administrator reported having a high level of curricula knowledge, while the majority assessed their knowledge as either low or moderate.

The participants indicated that they primarily acquired their curricula knowledge through their bachelors degree education and in-service training programs while working as an administrator. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Aygün and Taşdan (2023), in which school administrators reported that their bachelors degree education and in-service training were the main sources contributing to their knowledge and awareness of the curricula.

The participants reported that they did not encounter significant curricula-related challenges in their administrative roles. School principals are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the centrally designed curricula delivered to their institutions. However, since school administrators have no authority over the scope or content of the nationally mandated curricula, their lack of involvement in curricula development may lead them to perceive no major issues—despite potential systemic limitations.

Participants indicated that they faced more pressing challenges in areas such as discipline, financial issues, and students' behavioral problems. They considered curricula-related problems to be less significant and not a priority. The primary issues school administrators encounter include student absenteeism, shortcomings in the evaluation process, teachers' lack of knowledge, insufficient awareness among parents, the intensive nature of the curricula content, and the procedures related to elective courses. These concerns align with those identified in the study by Durak and Semerci (2016). This study, conducted with 17 administrators during the 2014-2015 academic year, found that administrators also reported issues such as "insufficient teacher training," "parental indifference or ignorance," and "the excessive or inadequate intensity of curricula content".

Participants agree on the importance of school administrators being knowledgeable about the curricula. It has been emphasized that this expertise contributes to various processes, such as improving school operations, supporting the teachers' implementation of curricula and planning of educational activities, guiding teachers, and enhancing quality of education. These perspectives are consistent with findings in the existing literature. Similarly, Kalkan Çelik and Sezgin (2022), Lee and Dimmock (1999) stressed that administrators' knowledge of the curricula plays a crucial role in the educational process and is essential for the effective operation of teaching and learning. School principals' indirect influence on school effectiveness can be realized by offering opportunities that contribute to the enhancement of teachers' instructional capacity (Sanchez & Watson, 2021).

School administrators have expressed the opinion that teachers' curricula knowledge should be at a higher level. However, school administrators have responsibilities as much as teachers in the effectiveness of schools. Eren (2020) found a significant relationship between school administrators' instructional leadership behaviors and their ability to elevate their schools to an effective school level in his research. It has been concluded that teachers' perceptions of effective schools are directly proportional to the principal's instructional leadership and consequently their curricula knowledge. In another study, it was determined that strong academic and administrative leadership plays a significant role in the success of school organizations. (Deniz vd., 2022). The professional behaviors exhibited by school leaders also influence teachers during the process. Therefore, the findings that teachers tend to be innovative and show organizational commitment (Abdullahi, 2020) lead to the conduct of educational activities in a current, innovative, and high-quality manner.

School administrators have emphasized that teachers should possess a higher level of curricula knowledge. However, school administrators share equal responsibility with teachers in ensuring the effectiveness of schools. In a study by Eren (2020), a significant relationship was found between school administrators' instructional leadership behaviors and their ability to transform their schools into effective educational institutions. The study concluded that teachers' perceptions of an effective school are directly linked to the administrators' instructional leadership and their level of curricula knowledge. Similarly, another study by Deniz et al. (2022) revealed that strong academic and administrative leadership plays a critical role in the success of school organizations. Moreover, the professional behaviors exhibited by school leaders significantly influence teachers. For example, Abdullahi (2020) found that such leadership encourages teachers to adopt innovative practices and demonstrate organizational commitment. These behaviors, in turn, support the quality of education that is current, innovative, and of high quality.

Effective school administrators are expected to serve as instructional leaders by fostering trust in teachers, promoting their active involvement in curricula implementation, and recognizing the central role of curricula in education. Furthermore, they must maintain a clear awareness that the core mission of schools is “teaching” (Aydn, 2018). Furthermore, as highlighted by He et al. (2024), instructional leadership serves as a significant predictor of teachers' professional development. The literature (Bellibas et al., 2020; He et al., 2024; Sebastian et al., 2016) reveals that the instructional leadership behaviors of school administrators have a positive transformative effect on teachers' professional development and classroom practices. Based on these results, it can be concluded that effective and dynamic school administrators contribute to the development of teachers with professional and pedagogical knowledge within the framework of instructional leadership.

Suggestions

Based on interviews conducted with school administrators, certain gaps have been identified in their knowledge of curricula. While administrators emphasized that teachers should possess greater curricula knowledge, they tended to underestimate their own critical role in supporting effective curricula implementation—a role that also requires a deep understanding of the curricula. To address these gaps and enhance administrators' awareness and competence, it is recommended that targeted in-service training programs on curricula be organized. Improving administrators' knowledge and awareness of curricula is expected to have a positive impact on the overall quality of education in schools. Furthermore, involving school administrators in the curricula revision process led by the Ministry would be a valuable step toward more effective and contextually relevant curricular development. Such initiatives can be carried out in collaboration with faculties of education. Activities such as informative seminars, workshops, and mentoring programs aimed at improving principals' curricula literacy may positively influence student achievement.

Participants stated that it is sufficient for them to be knowledgeable only about the curricula related to their own field. However, it is suggested that school administrators should be familiar with all curricula implemented in their schools, not just those within their area of specialization. Among the various initiatives to promote school development, it should be emphasized that having advanced and qualified curricula literacy is a critical factor enabling school principals

to supervise school activities effectively. In this regard, principals should be instilled with the perception that possessing curricula knowledge across all disciplines is a natural and indispensable part of their professional responsibilities. Enhancing administrators' overall curricula knowledge is expected to positively impact the quality of education in schools.

The findings of this study indicate that school administrators' instructional leadership practices are crucial in facilitating teachers' professional development opportunities. Furthermore, effective leadership enhances teachers' access to these opportunities, thereby contributing to improved student academic achievement. A key recommendation of this study is to strengthen school administrators' knowledge and skills in effective school management and instructional leadership. Updating curriculum literacy courses and practical components within leadership training programs for school principals, as well as in master's and doctoral programs in educational administration and supervision, can contribute to the development of the principal profile

This research was limited to school administrators working in two provinces, Çanakkale and Muğla, located in west of Türkiye. Future studies could expand the scope to include administrators from various other provinces across Türkiye, allowing for broader generalization of the findings. Furthermore, as this study focused solely on the perspectives of school administrators, it is recommended that future research incorporate the views of other stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding curricula implementation and school leadership.

Ethics Statements

This study was conducted in full compliance with ethical standards, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of all participants.

Declarations Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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