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Editorial

Ali Ersoy¹ 

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Dear readers,

I am delighted to share the new issue of the *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: Theory and Practice (QIETP)* journal. This issue includes three research articles and two review articles. I am grateful to our esteemed authors and referees for their contributions to QIETP. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the authors and reviewers who contributed to this issue with their valuable work.

The first article in this issue is a research article titled "Know Your Why: The Resilience of Positive Experienced Teachers." The study was conducted by Eric B. Gibson using a hermeneutical phenomenological design. The study aims to examine the resilience of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience who have had positive experiences. Utilizing self-determination theory (SDT), this study examines the relationship between teachers' resilience and the fulfillment of psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study may be of interest to researchers engaged in hermeneutical phenomenological research.

The second study is a research article titled "School Administrators' Views on the Curricula in the Context of Effective School Management and Instructional Leadership," conducted by Gamze Gülin Aygün, Kadriye Çakmak, and Nejat İra. The researchers examined the concept of curriculum literacy within the context of effective school management and leadership from the perspective of school administrators, employing qualitative research methods. The study is significant in that it provides an in-depth examination of school management and curriculum literacy using qualitative methods.

The third study is a research article titled "Mothers' Experience of Home Education with their Children During COVID-19: A Qualitative Systematic Review" by Fatih Selim Sellüm, Ali Ersoy, and Dilruba Kürüm-Yapıcıoğlu. Sellüm and colleagues evaluated studies focusing on mothers who experienced their children's education process at home during the COVID-19 pandemic using a qualitative systematic review. The study, which comprehensively assesses the phenomenon of motherhood during the pandemic from the perspective of home education for children, has revealed significant findings.

The fourth article in this issue is Sadegül Akbaba-Altun's research article titled "The Transferability of Teacher Characteristics in the Transition to School Leadership." In her study, Akbaba-Altun examines the characteristics that teachers develop, maintain, adapt, or abandon during their transition to school leadership roles through teaching, aiming to explore how these characteristics are reflected in leadership practices and professional identity from a qualitative perspective. The study is significant for its in-depth examination of how leadership characteristics reflect in professional identity from a qualitative research perspective.

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The final article in this issue is Fatma Mızıkacı's research article titled "Qualitative research trends in graduate theses in educational sciences: A study from Türkiye." In her study, Mızıkacı conducted a detailed analysis of graduate theses completed in the field of educational sciences in Türkiye between 2000 and 2024 from the perspective of qualitative methodologies. The study is significant for its portrayal of trends in qualitative research methods in graduate theses in the field of educational sciences in the last quarter of the period, within the Turkish context.

We invite you to submit your research articles using qualitative methods and review studies related to the qualitative paradigm to QIETP. We look forward to seeing you in the next issue. Happy reading!

Professor Ali Ersoy
Editor-in-Chief

Keywords

QIETP, editorial, hermeneutical phenomenological, qualitative approach, qualitative systematic review, research paradigms, graduate theses

Know Your Why: The Resilience of Positive Experienced Teachers*

Eric B. Gibson¹ 

To cite this article

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Abstract

Purpose: The problem is that it is difficult for teachers to remain committed and resilient in their school community when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. This hermeneutical phenomenological study's purpose was to examine the resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Using self-determination theory (SDT), this study links the resilience of teachers to the fulfilment of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Method: This study's central research question was: What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? Triangulation of a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups provided data from the lived experiences of 15 teachers from four continents who have remained committed to their teaching practice for at least five years. The data was analysed and distilled into themes using Atlas.ti software.

Findings: The data revealed the themes of resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation. Teachers can continue at the same or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching.

Implications for Research and Practice: Positive experienced teachers face the same stressors as all teachers while primarily relying on intrinsic motivation by frequently revisiting their reasons for teaching to overcome its difficulties and remain positive and engaged. Identifying and relying on positive experienced teachers can bolster the school environment.

Keywords

resilience, positive, experienced, teacher, intrinsic motivation

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Introduction

Teacher attrition has become a recognised issue hindering education at all levels in the past three decades, where up to half of all beginning teachers leave the profession in five years (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Marso & Pigge, 1997). Over this period, the teacher workforce has increased in average age, indicating that fewer younger teachers remain in the profession despite beginning teachers representing the largest percentage of teachers each year (Ingersoll et al., 2021). However, the development of teacher resilience in the school community is a relatively unexplored area in education (Lowe et al., 2019a; Mullen et al., 2021).

Teaching is a challenging profession with inveterate difficulties and potential positive outcomes (Boogren, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2021). Societies recognise the need for education but struggle to retain teachers to enact it (Gore & Rickards, 2021; Gu, 2017; Jackson, 2022; Martens & Windzio, 2022; Mullen et al., 2021; Quinn & Buchanan, 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Societal issues and political interference provide a taxing environment for teachers to bring learning and growth into their educational communities (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Teachers leaving due to the fractious conditions contribute to societal and learning costs that negatively affect students, other educators, and the entire school (Aguilar, 2018; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2021).

Attempts to explain teacher resilience have come from personal, environmental, and societal perspectives (Mansfield, 2020). Still, it is unclear how the interplay of these factors and the emotional, motivational, professional, and communal aspects of resilience combine to foster resilience in teachers (Mullen et al., 2021). Many societal issues and political platforms find their practical fulfilment in the challenging world of the classroom (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). For instance, teachers of colour traditionally have experienced more significant inherent obstacles to thriving in the teaching profession (Poku, 2022). Teachers are pulled in many directions trying to meet student needs while juggling the mandates of school administrators, society, and politicians (Bureau et al., 2022; Cuevas et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2019; Schutz et al., 2018; Smith & Firth, 2018). This multi-side tug-of-war has caused many teachers to leave the profession before they make it to their sixth year of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2022). The gap created by teacher attrition negatively affects student learning, staff cohesiveness, and school administrator longevity (Aguilar, 2018; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Moè & Katz, 2020). How the remaining teachers handle these challenges while positively contributing to their school communities is an area of deficit in the literature (Bastian et al., 2022; Prout et al., 2019).

The problem is that it is difficult for teachers to remain committed and resilient in their school community when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. Between 33-50% of all teachers who enter the profession leave within five years (Den Brok et al., 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). For those who stay, the mechanisms of resilience development to remain in teaching require clarification (Mullen et al., 2021). Knowing how they do so has practical implications for teacher preparation programs, administrators, other teachers, students, and the larger educational community.

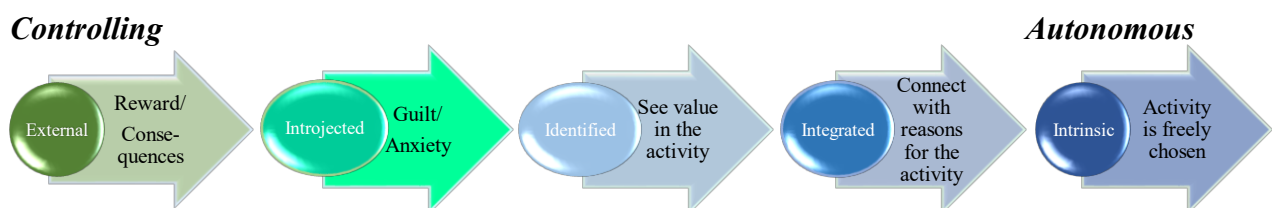
Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) predicts why teachers leave the profession and how they can develop resilience to remain positive and engaged in their school community (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vermote et al., 2022). According to SDT developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), humans have three psychological needs necessary for self-fulfilment: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As individuals perceive their needs being met in their surroundings, they will develop intrinsic motivation and act out of their desires and interests (Deci et al., 1991, 1996). SDT explains why people engage in activities by linking psychological needs to motivational profiles (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Individuals' perceptions of the environment supporting self-determination are crucial to their internalizing motivational factors (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Providing surroundings that raise people's autonomy, competence, and relatedness leads to higher intrinsic motivation and greater involvement, commitment, and production allowing them to overcome difficulties (Chiu, 2022; Jiang et al., 2019).

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), individuals must be internally motivated and believe their actions will bring about their desired outcomes to effectively influence their surroundings. People require their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to be met to fully develop intrinsic motivation and experience well-being and growth in a school setting (Allen & Sims, 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). As people's actions reveal their beliefs, there is a spectrum of motivation ranging from no motivation to operating wholly out of independence (Deci et al., 1991, 1996, 2017; Moran et al., 2012). Why individuals choose to engage ultimately determines their placement on this continuum in the school environment (Bureau et al., 2022; Cuevas et al., 2018; Escriva-Boulley et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021; See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Motivation Continuum



(Deci et al., 1991, 2017; Moran et al., 2012)

SDT explains educational situations and outcomes related to resilience in the school community (Deci et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). The perception of psychological need fulfilment among school leaders, teachers, and students explains motivational engagement and ensuing results (Chiu, 2022). SDT predicts teacher engagement in the school setting based on the perceived meeting of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Bureau et al., 2022; Smith & Firth, 2018). When these settings meet the needs of individuals to operate out of their initiative and interests, this leads to higher engagement and learning outcomes (Patall et al., 2018). Need satisfaction is noticeable in its impact on the school environment and retention of teachers (Jiang et al., 2019; Matthews et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Teaching is a demanding profession with a broad scope that deals with complex ethical, creative, mental, and emotional aspects of personhood for students and teachers (Boogren, 2021; Goodwin et al., 2021). These exigencies often expose teachers to multiple stressors and can impact their emotional, physical, and psychological health, leading to an exit from the field (Ebersold et al., 2019; Poku, 2022). Teacher's attrition rate is high compared to other stressful public service professions (Carroll et al., 2022; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Between 30-50% of teachers leave the teaching field within their first five years of teaching (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Reducing teacher attrition by 50% would eliminate the shortage of teachers in the United States, creating a larger pool of qualified teachers that benefits school communities (Sutcher et al., 2019). Thus, the challenging educational environment has created the need for resilient teachers who can continue despite the difficulties.

Teaching Challenges and Burnout

The most sizable numbers of teachers exiting the field are beginning teachers and those at the end of their careers, resulting in a U-shaped curve (Admiraal et al., 2019). However, retiring teachers currently account for only 14% of those leaving teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Around 10% of teachers in the profession are in their first or second year of teaching (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Beginning teachers' first years in the occupation significantly impact their future (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2022). Beginning teachers considered leaving because they resented long working hours, large class sizes, and the feeling of being taken advantage of by school leaders who had control over the renewal of their contract for the following year (Gallant & Riley, 2017). Consequently, the constant entering and exit of beginning teachers create difficulties for the educational system and for remaining teachers.

Attrition leads to teacher shortages and a higher percentage of inexperienced teachers, resulting in educational costs (Sutcher et al., 2019). In 2017-18, the largest single group of teachers were beginning teachers in their first year of teaching, while 44% of teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Poor handling of teacher shortfalls increases the burden on an already strained system, leading to inexperienced or ill-trained teachers in subjects for which they have no preparation, resulting in lower student learning outcomes (Wiggan et al., 2020). Schools with more significant numbers of teachers leaving each year face difficulties with consistency and effective student learning (Aguilar, 2018; DeMatthews et al., 2022). Teachers who taught in controlling environments were more likely to reflect this in their teaching styles, leading to lower learning outcomes, student motivation, and teacher burnout (Beymer et al., 2022; Moè & Katz, 2020; Vermote et al., 2022). Teachers carry their stress into the classroom, which students can sense (Philibert et al., 2020). Antagonistic reactions from teachers interrupt the learning process (McTighe & Willis, 2019). Many inexperienced teachers may not have the skills to handle these challenges which explains why learning suffers and young teachers become frustrated. Several causes contribute to this cascade.

A combination of external and internal factors usually pushes teachers away from their vocation. Teachers experience more stress than other professions (Carroll et al., 2022). Stress results when expectations exceed the resources provided. Some reasons teachers gave for

exiting teaching include poor support and pay, lack of professional development and ability to influence outcomes at the school, struggle to meet the demands of the profession and make connections with other teachers, and an increased emphasis on accountability through standardizing testing (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Arviv Elyashiv & Navon, 2021; Beck et al., 2020; Den Brok et al., 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017). Sustained stress wears on the individual teacher and compounds into the teaching and school environment.

The strains of teaching with its various classroom stressors increase the risk of attrition (Li et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018). Finding physical, mental, and emotional space to process these difficulties is often challenging. In a two-year study, Bieler (2018) found that high school teachers had five separate student interactions every minute in the classroom. Teachers, in general, face a decision regarding educational practice every 15 seconds during every school day (Boogren, 2021). The sheer volume is exhausting and leads to difficulty in making constructive choices (Lee et al., 2023). Despite the significant increase in teachers at the elementary level over the past 30 years, teacher workloads for secondary teachers have increased due to larger class sizes and more weekly instructional hours while teaching more classes (Gallant & Riley, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2021; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). Teachers entering the profession face heavy expectations as novices to understand the learning abilities of their students, their subject matter, and how best to connect those two to promote student learning and development (Luke & Gourd, 2018). The heavy workload and significant, constant student queries and interactions could prove overwhelming and exhausting.

Additional extrinsic causes contribute to higher attrition among educators including administrative deficiencies and lack of support. Poor administrative support was a frequently given reason for teachers leaving the field (Beck et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). Support from school leadership, or its lack thereof, was a more accurate indicator of teachers remaining in the profession than the student makeup of a school (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Van Eycken et al., 2022). Teaching is often a solitary undertaking (Ortogero et al., 2022; Philibert et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). Teachers are less likely to stay at their school without receiving support from others (Arviv Elyashiv & Navon, 2021; Beck et al., 2020; Beymer et al., 2022). A school atmosphere lacking support correlates to attrition more than student body composition (DeMatthews et al., 2022; Van Eycken et al., 2022). When teachers' need for connectedness was unmet, teachers lost perspective on their worth and moved toward burnout (Moè & Katz, 2020).

Burnout is the primary intrinsic cause of teacher attrition, often fomented by other extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Li et al., 2021; Moè & Katz, 2020; Ng et al., 2018). Burnout occurs when teachers experience long-term stress (Carroll et al., 2022). When experiencing burnout, teachers exhibit lower proficiency, an increased negative attitude, and emotional exhaustion, with the latter being the highest predictive factor of teachers' desire to leave the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Xia et al., 2023). Over the past 35 years studies linked low motivation and unrealistic expectations for teacher performance to teacher burnout and a premature exit from the profession (García-Carmona et al., 2019; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Thus, the accumulated stress eventually interferes with teachers' functioning and well-being if they do not process their emotions. The inability to handle the negative emotions of stressful school environments seems to be a primary predictor of attrition (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Li et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). However, not all teachers leave, indicating that some have developed coping

mechanisms to deal with these situations. This study aimed to discover the ways teachers have managed to do so and remain effective.

Resilience

Resilience was the largest identified intrinsic factor in teacher retention (Ellison & Woods, 2020; Hascher et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2021). While many teachers leave early into their careers, retention happens when they remain (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Internal motivation and the perceived ability to have positive and respectful relationships with students were identified as integral to teachers' continuation in the teaching vocation (Saks et al., 2021). Teachers who developed dedication and resilience in their effective practice increased their likelihood of remaining in teaching (Collie & Perry, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2019). The adeptness of teachers in navigating the difficulty of the profession had a great deal to do with the strength of their belief in their abilities and educational values, along with the support of their fellow teachers and school leaders (Gu, 2017).

Resilience is the development of skills, support, knowledge, and practices that aid individuals in overcoming adverse circumstances and lead to teacher retention (Harris, 2020; Ng et al., 2018; Smith & Firth, 2018). Internal (personality and motivational) and external (professional and relational) factors reinforce resilience for experienced teachers (Shields & Mullen, 2020). Environmental considerations were at least as necessary to teacher resilience as personal ones (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Fernandes et al. (2019) found intrinsic qualities of resilience (general sense of wellness, positive purpose, and skills to deal with difficulty) are insufficient to retain teachers. Relational support from principals, fellow teachers, and significant relationships outside the school is necessary to maintain resilience (Jefferson et al., 2022). Substantial, personal relationships in and out of the school setting aided positive experienced teachers in navigating the profession's difficulties and allowed them to maintain lives outside of teaching (Prout et al., 2019). Accordingly, the ways teachers have developed resilience through both external and internal support need clarification and were a focus of this study (Mullen et al., 2021).

Teachers' resilience increased when they saw teaching as a calling, which led to retention (Wiggan et al., 2020). Internal and altruistic motivation and a strong sense of competence were the primary reasons teachers remained in their roles (Chiong et al., 2017). A positive sense of competence and calling as a teacher contributed to maintaining their general welfare and efficacy in the classroom (Van der Want et al., 2018). This connection indicates a positive correlation between dedication and a high perception of teaching ability, attainment, and gratification in teachers' work (Admiraal et al., 2019). Teachers who redirect their energies toward developing teaching as a calling by focusing on their purposes, capabilities, and fervour for teaching can build resilience (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Mielke, 2019). Experienced teachers remained in teaching due to their purpose and passion for teaching students, their subject content, beneficial school relationships and environment, and an inviting schedule (Shields & Mullen, 2020). Teachers also found meaningful relationships with other teachers and people outside teaching, which helped them remember the importance of teaching and the need to build up students and teachers entering the profession (Prout et al., 2019). Maintaining healthy relationships and strong intrinsic motivation is thus crucial to developing resilience.

Resilience links all other retention factors together through complex development and interaction (Chen & Chi-Kin Lee, 2022). The external factors, including the support of school leadership and the educational community along with professional development, find a connection to teachers' internal equilibrium and personal motivation in resilience (Fernandes et al., 2019; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2021; Ratanasiripong et al., 2021). The connected thread of resilience to the other factors linked to teacher retention highlights its importance (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Lemon & McDonough, 2023). Resilience seeks to moderate emotions in teaching's challenging sphere, preventing the descent into burnout and eventual exit from the occupation (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Moè & Katz, 2020). It remains foundational in teacher retention and contribution (Mullen et al., 2021). Resilient teachers remain in teaching and positively influence their school environment (Carroll et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Shields & Mullen, 2020).

As this review indicates, abundant literature exists on the factors related to beginning teachers leaving the profession but very little on the dynamics encouraging the resilience of experienced teachers (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Chiong et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2019a, 2019b; Mullen et al., 2021). More research is needed to determine the factors under which teachers who experience negative pressures can remain in teaching and overcome such detractors (Shields & Mullen, 2020). The complexity of the factors involved in building resilience creates uncertainty in how it is developed in teachers (Ellison & Woods, 2020; Vallés & Clarà, 2022). How each aspect of resilience development connects to its growth in teachers and their ability to overcome teaching stresses is unclear (Hascher et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2022). Since resilience ties these retention factors together, knowing how teachers developed resilience would be helpful to struggling and beginning teachers.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to examine the resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. The resilience of positive experienced teachers will be generally defined as committed and engaged teachers who overcome the difficulties of teaching in their school communities. Positive describes teachers' attitude and approach to the profession, while experienced designates their familiarity. The purpose of this study connects to its significance for beginning and experienced teachers who seek to stay positive and engaged.

The central research question for this study was: What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? This question provides more detail on how those teachers who remain in the profession incorporate mechanisms and responses to the challenges arising from the early years of teaching. It ties directly to SDT. The connection of internal motivation to resilience comes out of this theory. This question attempts to determine how positive experienced teachers have willingly continued in their profession counter to those factors that make it difficult to do so.

Methods

This hermeneutical phenomenological study examines resilience in the lived experiences of positive experienced teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Data collection

employed a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups as the vehicle to encounter teachers' lived experiences with the phenomenon. Quotes from participants inhabit the findings and discussion to give voice to their experiences. The setting for this study was anywhere positive experienced teachers exist. The recruitment methods for this study restricted teachers' locations to the United States or international schools on three continents outside of North America. The participants of this study were 15 current primary or secondary teachers with at least five years of teaching experience who met the requirements of a positive teacher (Lowe et al., 2019b).

Procedures

All interested candidates completed an inventory to determine whether they met the requirement of being a positive experienced teacher. Developed and validated by Lowe et al. (2019a, 2019b), the inventory measures participants' responses on a seven-point Likert scale in innovation, growth focus, expertise, and leadership (see Appendix A for the Positive Veteran Teacher Inventory). This inventory served as an indicator of the candidates' resilience. Those currently teaching at the primary or secondary level with at least five complete years of teaching experience who met all four criteria of a positive experienced teacher were eligible to participate in the study.

Selective recruitment of participants sought to include a variety of teaching disciplines, school types, and locations. I collected a wide range of data by recruiting candidates who met the qualifications for the study from diverse teaching backgrounds and experience. 15 participants were deemed sufficient for data saturation. I collected data from 15 individual interviews and between four and 12 participants for each of the three focus groups. All 15 participants completed the journal prompt, an interview, and participated in a focus group. Focus groups were selected based on participant locations to ensure similar teaching situations and time zones. Candidates for the study were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time and have their data destroyed. Those who agreed to participate received a copy of these rights.

Teachers were contacted via email and social media and asked to participate in the study. Those participants who agreed to said conditions provided basic biographic information and prior teaching experience. Teachers were promised confidentiality. Data collection and storage procedures for those teachers in Europe followed the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (Calder, 2020). Participants who met all the study criteria completed a journal prompt, an individual interview, and participated in a focus group (see Appendix B for the specific prompt and questions). The prompts and questions for the data collection tools in the study were prepared by me based on an extensive literature review identifying the qualities of resilience and positive teachers and my experience with the phenomenon (Carroll et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Lowe et al, 2019a, 2019b; Mullen et al., 2021; Shields & Mullen, 2020). The teachers involved were given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Participants received the opportunity to analyse the transcripts for accuracy from the data provided.

The text from these data collection methods was uploaded to Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software where coding and analysis occurred. According to Saldaña (2021), a code encapsulates the meaning of data in a word or concise phrase. Using Atlas.ti data analysis software, a second

level of coding occurred to organize the diverse codes into similar, connected words or phrases that best represented the data across all the interviews. As patterns of codes emerged across participant responses, then groups of codes were placed together. Out of these groups of codes, patterns developed as constructions of meaning. From these patterns, changes to the questions asked in the focus groups to support the data from the individual interviews were considered and implemented. I compared the themes generated from the journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups to generate findings and conclusions. The study's design, data collection, and analysis procedures followed those for hermeneutic phenomenological studies as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Van Manen (2016).

This hermeneutical phenomenological study attempted to ascertain the collective essence in many people's lived experiences of a specific occurrence or defined circumstance that is germane to researchers' backgrounds and interests (Van Manen, 2016b). Van Manen defines hermeneutical as exploring meaning in people's lives as a qualitative research approach where the researcher has personal experience with the topic. This study followed a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. This methodology applied to this study as I consider myself a positive veteran teacher and intended to explore the phenomenon of how such teachers remain committed and resilient in their school communities when faced with the challenges inherent to the profession. My experience and understanding of the phenomenon allowed me to clearly define it, interact with others, and process their encounters with it. I collected and interpreted the findings but did not contribute any data to the study. This movement toward clarity involved the challenging process of isolating the aspects of the concept or event while still being conscious of its entirety (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My role as a researcher was to distill others' descriptions of the phenomenon into a coherent explanation of its fundamental nature.

Participants

This study comprised 15 participants from diverse educational backgrounds, locations, schools, and experience levels. All participants received their post-secondary education in the United States, and 11 out of 15 have experience teaching in a North American context. Four out of 15 participants' highest post-secondary education was a bachelor's degree, while 11 out of 15 earned at least one master's degree (see Table 1). The same proportions applied to participants' current teaching locations: four of the 15 participants taught in four different regions in the United States. The remainder of the participants taught in international schools located in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Nine out of 15 participants were female and six out of 15 were male. Two of the 15 participants taught in elementary schools while there were two full-time and one half-time in a middle school setting (one participant split time between the middle and high school). The remainder of the participants taught at the high school level. An average number of 20 years of teaching experience for participants came from a varied spectrum of five to 44 years in the profession in 12 different subject areas.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Education	School Area	School Location	Experience (years)	Subject Area(s)
Alice	Bachelor's	Elementary	United States	44	All
Alina	Master's	Elementary	United States	15	Gifted, Math
Bryan	Master's	High School	International	13	Science
David	Bachelor's	High School	International	22	Math, Science, Technology
Grace	Master's	Middle School	International	14	Social Studies, World Language
Hannah	Master's	High School	International	30	English
Isabella	Master's	High School	International	26	English
Jerome	Master's	Middle/ High School	International	22	Performing Arts
Karl	Master's	Middle School	International	12	English
Kristin	Master's	High School	United States	29	Intervention
Luke	Master's	High School	International	10	Visual Arts
Mila	Master's	High School	United States	22	English
Phoebe	Master's	High School	International	20	Social Studies
Sophia	Bachelor's	High School	International	8	World Language
Stephen	Bachelor's	High School	International	5	Bible, Science

Trustworthiness

The fundamental aspects of credibility, transferability, and confirmability for the trustworthiness of a qualitative study come from Lincoln and Guba (1985). Van Manen (2016) used the words reliability, evidence, and generalizability to convey that a study carries applicability to the broader world beyond the study through recognized scholarship approaches that grant security and confidence in the findings. The satisfaction of these criteria is essential to the validity of the study's results. Qualitative studies necessitate this demonstration to carry equal importance to quantitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The subjection of the study to these criteria accomplished this purpose.

Credibility

Credibility relies on the authentic presentation of the findings based on the participants' meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study relied upon triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity to ensure credibility. Triangulation allowed me to confirm data and analysis through multiple means to ensure its reliability. The three methods used for triangulation in this study were a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups. Obtaining comprehensive participant explanations of the phenomenon transpired by asking unique but overlapping questions in the journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups. Employing a research journal ensured that the meaning of the data matched the participants' tone, emotions, and non-verbal expressions from interviews and focus groups. These three data collection techniques complemented one another, so the data were representative of the participants' meaning (Miles et al., 2020).

Member checking allowed me to repeat influential statements back to participants in individual interviews and focus groups to confirm the meaning of their replies (Schoeller, 2023). Participants received transcripts of their interviews and focus groups. They had the opportunity to verify that their statements in the transcript matched their recollection of what they said during those events. In addition, I used focus groups as member checking, asking questions that overlapped with the individual interviews to corroborate if similar responses arose. Finally, I asked participants to comment on my interpretation of their primary emphases from the individual interviews and focus groups (Miles et al., 2020).

Referential adequacy was the third method of ensuring credibility used in this study. The data from the individual interviews was analysed separately from that of the focus groups to compare the findings for agreement (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Similarly, the journal prompt received separate analyses from the focus groups and individual interviews. According to White and Cooper (2022), this process aids in ensuring overlap between data sources, allowing for scrutiny of possible conflicting results and comparing those differences to present a rich pool and examination of data. Along with my research journal, this intersection of data collected produced credibility in the data from the journal prompts, individual interviews, and focus groups using a separate analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Referential adequacy, member checking, and triangulation yield confidence that the data represents the phenomenon and those with lived experiences.

Transferability

Transferability describes the degree to which the research findings in this study are valid in describing the phenomenon in other corresponding populations outside the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study examined the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation. The sampling population was any teacher with more than five years of teaching experience who met the qualifications of a positive experienced teacher. Teachers who taught in multiple contexts, various subject areas, different school types and areas, and different geographic regions were interviewed and placed in focus groups for the study. The population and sampling intended to produce the diversity needed for transferability (Van Manen, 2016). The data descriptions aimed at an in-depth portrayal of the phenomenon by limiting the number of individual interviews and focus groups and giving the

themes a vivid fullness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020). The reader is the ultimate judge of the degree of transferability (Carminati, 2018; Elo et al., 2014; Hays & McKibben, 2021; Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019).

Confirmability

Confirmability measures the comparative objectivity of the study's results (Miles et al., 2020). Triangulation of data collection, an audit trail, and reflexivity were three techniques chosen to produce confirmability in this study. Journal prompts, individual interviews, and focus groups were the data collection methods to ensure the data collected determined the derived themes rather than my views (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). A digital audit trail exists to verify the collection of documents and appropriate procedures for review in an external inquiry audit.

Reflexivity is the examination and disclosure of my "biases, values, and experiences" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 229) that relate to my position in the study. A reflexive journal was kept electronically as part of the research journal to express my opinions, self-observations, and personal conclusions. This procedure allowed a comparison of the coding and themes developed in the study to ensure my biases did not influence the findings (Miles et al., 2020; Van Manen, 2016). This digital document has separate sections to divide observations, my research thoughts, and conclusions during data collection.

Findings

The data provided by the positive experienced teachers in the study through a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups was analysed and categorized into themes. The themes of resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation are developed and separated into sub-themes when appropriate. Quotes from participants accompany an overall picture of each theme. The means positive experienced teachers employ to remain resilient in their school community are the focus of the presented results.

Resilience Through Community

Resilience through community emerged as an important theme from the study data. Participants identified the role that school community members play in helping teachers handle adversity and continue teaching with excellence. The community, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents, affect teacher resilience through their interactions with teachers. Isabella talked about her resilience and how to remain resilient as a teacher, "Working with other people who are as dedicated and really want excellence has been a highlight. I would say find other life-giving teachers who want to encourage you and have the same educational philosophy as you." Alice has found resilience support in parents, "I've always been in a school where the parents are so invested in their children and so thankful that they'll do anything to support their child and to help you and to support you." Study participants concurred that the school community influences teacher resilience.

Personal Reflection

Participants accentuated that personal reflection is a necessary part of practice for teachers. Developing habits of evaluation that allow for improvement and intention to grow summarizes the sub-theme of personal reflection. In her focus group, Isabella iterated the need to examine personal growth conditions in teaching, “I have to reframe the situation in a positive light. What can I learn from this and what can I do better next time? I have to reframe it as a learning experience.” Hannah explained in her interview that she uses similar practices to refine her curriculum, “Journaling after every unit, I’ll go through, ‘Okay, these are the things that worked well. Here’s the changes I’m going to make next year.’ It’s a professional journal of ‘What do I need to put in my curriculum documents?’” Luke found comfort in analysing his previous experience, “Having that knowledge makes it so that you can become more resilient so that you can be prepared to know what happens in this situation.” Participants viewed taking time from the daily pressures of teaching to engage in personal reflection as necessary to develop a growth mindset.

Healthy Boundaries

Teachers in the study all named the importance of separating their identity from the role of teaching, maintaining a life outside the school, and taking appropriate responsibility at the school and in the classroom. Teaching can be all-consuming, so these teachers identified the importance of doing their role well—in their journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups—but not allowing it to expand to become who they are or all they do. Sophia proclaimed in her interview:

My identity, my work, and my value, or even my ultimate objectives as I step into education, my value and worth aren’t on how my students experience the classroom or what I feel like I’m accomplishing within the lesson plans each week. My value is created, and my purpose and my perspective are rooted in something that’s eternal and unshakable, and I have to frequently call myself back to that.

Hannah advised self-care when she said in her interview, “Make sure you’re taking care of your health. Take care of yourself and your mental health also.” These teachers advocated developing an identity and life separate from teaching while doing their best within the bounds of their role.

Identity

Avoiding tying importance and value solely to performance as a teacher emerged as a sub-theme during this study on positive experienced teachers’ resilience. Study participants advocated the importance of having an identity outside the teaching profession. Mila identified this need in her focus group, “Making sure that [students] are not my source of joy or emotional stability. I bring that to them. That’s something that I can offer to them. I’m getting that somewhere else. I come into the classroom with that.” Jerome followed up on that in his interview, saying, “There’s not a certain kind of response that I’m needing from students in order for me to value what I’m doing.” Study participants distinguished an identity developed apart from being a teacher as bringing freedom and stability.

Outside Life

Apart from having an identity, developing a life outside of teaching also came from participants as a sub-theme in healthy boundaries. The nature of teaching can take over all of teachers' free time and energy. Deliberately spending time away from teaching with life-giving people and activities originated from study participants as a means to have healthy boundaries. Alice noted in her interview:

I think sometimes we just need to take a deep breath. I think sometimes we get so busy and so maybe focus on what we have to get done that we don't just take a step back and take a deep breath and see the blessings and evaluate what's going well. What's not going well? I think we just need to give ourselves a break from the pressures of teaching sometimes. Just take that deep breath.

Alina encouraged involvement apart from the classroom, "Then just making sure that you have something else outside of school. Whatever that something else is, like if it's a church, faith community, book club, something. Something besides your students." Life-giving opportunities to gain perspective and unwind provided teachers in the study with healthy space and boundaries.

Appropriate Responsibility

Differentiating inherent and apposite responsibilities in the teaching profession from those that go beyond expectations that drain teachers and threaten their commitment to the profession clarifies this sub-theme of healthy boundaries. Educators participating in this study gave responses that clarified appropriate teacher responsibilities. Maintaining a clear focus on the essentials of the profession allows teachers to excel without a myriad of possible distractions. Grace, in her focus group, iterated, "It took building upon months and months of seeing students come through some of those adverse situations and seeing myself come through it. Whether it ended up well or not but letting go of the things I couldn't control." Phoebe spoke of her learning curve as a teacher in her interview, "Looking back on some of the decisions that I made like giving daily homework that then needed to be graded. There were other ways to hold students accountable without creating hours and hours of work for myself." Separating important duties from multiple competing responsibilities helped teachers in the study maintain healthy boundaries.

Intrinsic Motivation

Teachers who clearly understand why they teach foster intrinsic motivation. This highest independent operating level infers teachers have moved beyond extrinsic motivators such as salary or praise (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). All study participants emphasized this theme throughout all three modes of data collected. David recognized the need for this in his focus group when he said:

Part of it is remembering what the prime objective is. Sometimes, education is a challenging beast to work with students towards a goal that they may or may not want to get towards. It may not be what I want to deal with, but it's a mindset that allows me to say, "I'm trying to remember the big picture, what it is that we're trying to accomplish and moving forward towards a task."

Intrinsic motivation provides teachers and students with the internal drive to continue even when difficulties occur.

Basis of Resilience

Intrinsic motivation formed the basis of resilience for study participants. Teachers noted they kept teaching because they had strong, personal reasons for doing so. Teachers who rely on their own reasons for teaching to overcome the adversity and difficulties in the profession use internal motivation as their basis of resilience. Stephen in his interview clarified, “I have systems and fundamental habits that root me. Because I am resilient, I have emotional energy to teach even if things are hard. I can be consistent in my approach regardless of the difficulties of the teaching profession.” Sophia explained her deeper motivations and how they influence her teaching during her focus group, “My entire philosophy of teaching is built around my convictions and faith, and that is why I get up every day. That’s my purpose and perspective. What does resiliency in teaching look like when that’s not at its core?” Reflecting on their motives helped study participants continue in the teaching profession.

Keep Your Why Clear

Study participants all expressed the need to not only understand their internal motivation but to refresh this awareness regularly. Frequently reviewing the substance of participants’ internal motivation for teaching helped them maintain it. Believing that teaching makes a difference and remaining clear on the reasons for this assisted those who engaged in the study to uphold their internal motivation. Kristin challenged teachers in her interview to “revisit your why always.” Karl affirmed the value of teaching and understanding your why when he said in his interview, “Just the fact that our profession matters; knowing that teaching, be it in a secular or a sacred environment, is life-changing for students. I can have a great impact and hopefully change lives for the better.” Recurrently, putting the why for teaching before teachers aided them in practicing it for their own reasons.

What are the ways positive experienced teachers develop resilience by increasing their intrinsic motivation? Teachers can continue at the same or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching. Grace expressed this:

I think enjoying teaching has become a bedrock for me. This is a job that I like doing. I’m motivated by students, by student growth, by the mission and vision of the school, and what we’re here to do in playing this role in a student’s journey through life and through their academic journey and education.

Teachers in the study expressed they weathered the storms of the teaching profession when they had an unclouded vision why they teach and operated out of their personal satisfaction.

Discussion

Several key interpretations of the data created a clear picture of positive experienced teachers’ resilience in their school communities. Positive experienced teachers are subject to the same difficulties as all teachers but chiefly rely on their reasons for teaching to remain motivated. A

love of students and a desire to see them grow and learn were the focal points for why these teachers remain in the profession.

Positive Experienced Teachers Encounter the Same Stressors

Positive experienced teachers develop resilience in the face of stressors that are common to all teachers. Study participants all cited difficulties with administration, negative teachers who refuse to grow, student needs and behaviour, difficult parent and community interactions, lack of preparation, and complex job responsibilities as sources of stress. Such strains match the ones teachers reported in the literature (Beymer et al., 2022; Boogren, 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2022; Ebersold et al., 2019; Gore & Rickards, 2021; Holloweck, 2019; Philibert et al., 2020). So, it is not that the sources of discomfort for positive experienced teachers are different, it is simply that they handle these tensions in ways that allow them to continue positively contributing to their school community.

Resilience Is Largely Intrinsic for Positive Experienced Teachers

While interactions with others influence positive experienced teachers' resilience, they do not seem to be the primary factor in developing and maintaining it. Teachers cited that their relationships in and out of the school setting helped encourage them and talk through difficult situations. However, negative interactions with stakeholders in the community threatened their resilience. Thus, a cancelling effect of others' positive and negative effects on teachers' resilience seems to occur. More clearly mentioned and often cited were participants' reasons for teaching and the difference they made as a result. Every teacher in the study highlighted teaching for their own reasons and the importance of being educators for their school communities, especially in students' lives. Alice declared, "For me, it's the most rewarding thing I've ever done to be able to make a difference in children's lives." David corroborated, "I think it's a calling. I find what I do rewarding despite the challenges." Sophia followed up, "That purpose gives you hope and a firm foundation to stand on as you look forward." Identifying and maintaining clear reasons for teaching through reflection and not depending on students to meet their needs for validation indicates intrinsic motivation's valuable role in keeping positive experienced teachers resilient.

Students Are the Primary Reason Positive Experienced Teachers Teach

Students emerged as the primary reason positive experienced teachers remain in the profession. Garnering the largest number of and most extensive responses given by participants despite being the subject of one-third or less of the questions asked of participants in journal prompts, interviews, and focus groups, students were clearly teachers' favourite subject to discuss. Every educator in the study expressed a love for students and helping them learn and grow. They voiced their priorities in this direction, showing students came first over helping other teachers or interacting with administrators, parents, and other members of the school community. Hannah affirmed, "I come back every year because of the students, not because of my love for my subject." Kristin affirmed that serving students motivates her, "Making sure the students are unconditionally loved, valued, supported, seen, and growing; if you always get back to that, it

keeps you going and helps you overcome [difficult] things.” Bryan found this to be the case, “I keep coming back, and the reason I like to teach is the students.” Alina expanded, “Building the relationships with kids is just really fun. So, I think that’s what keeps me going.” The opportunity to serve students and be part of their lives is the primary motivator for positive experienced teachers to remain in the profession.

Implications

The themes and interpretations of this study bring potential implications for the policy and practice of other school communities. Legislators, ministers of education, and school district administrators may benefit from the policy implications. School administrators, positive experienced teachers, students, educators, parents, and community members may also derive potential gain in the following implications for practice. Connecting the findings of this study to other contexts could stimulate possible growth in other school communities.

Teachers who fit the description of a positive experienced teacher should regularly consider examining their reasons for teaching, ensuring the reasons are centred around students and their growth. As study participants found such reflection beneficial to their resilience, other positive experienced teachers may likewise find it valuable. They might also benefit by developing interests outside of school and healthy boundaries that will keep the pressures of teaching from consuming all their time and energy. Teachers in the study identified finding outlets for expressing themselves creatively and prioritizing their physical and mental health as essential practices. Other positive experienced teachers could receive similar benefits from making space in their lives for taking care of themselves.

Positive experienced teachers may also gain valuable perspectives and ideas from each other through regular communication and observation. Fellow positive experienced teachers can learn from one another. Teachers in the study expressed gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on their practices and hear from other teachers about theirs. Positive experienced teachers can likewise learn from one another and continue to grow and develop as educators through reflections on their practice.

Parents and community members could seek to affirm positive experienced teachers as they encounter them through their students or other school events. Encouragement from parents and other members of the school would likely assist teachers in remaining positive and engaged and help overcome the negative voices they may encounter in their profession. Teachers in the study expressed that encouragement from the school community aided their resilience. Valuable encouragement from parents and community members may also accomplish similar gains for other positive experienced teachers.

In this study, resilience for positive experienced teachers hinged more on intrinsic motivation than external factors. This finding is a departure from the literature that claimed extrinsic elements were equal or more important in contributing to teacher resilience (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Collie & Perry, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2019; Shields & Mullen, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). This study centred around teachers with at least five years of experience who remained positive and engaged in their profession. The difference in experience and engagement could explain the difference between teachers in the study and the findings in the literature. Nevertheless, teachers in the study who maintained their internal motivation as a

cornerstone to their resilience could indicate a general shift towards intrinsic motivation on the motivation continuum for positive experienced teachers (see Figure 1).

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future research emerged from this study. The first came from the length of experience required for teachers participating in the study. Other studies examining positive experienced teachers placed a delimitation of 20 years of experience (Gray et al., 2021; Jefferson et al., 2022; Lowe et al., 2019a, 2019b; Prout et al., 2019). Replicating this study with teacher participants having at least 20 years of experience could bring varied results.

Varying study participants' location is another recommendation to expand the results of this study. Replicating this study in a singular country with a consistent school system or in a specific district or school setting will aid in determining the transferability of this study. Solely sampling teachers educated in the country chosen for study could help determine whether positive experienced teachers can be found in any location and if they vary in their resilience.

During their focus groups, study participants wondered about the limits of resilience for positive experienced teachers. They envisioned a study examining the conditions under which those who qualified as positive experienced teachers left the profession or would consider leaving the profession. The same methodology could apply to this study, but the research questions would have a different focus. Ascertaining the conditions that would cause even positive experienced teachers to leave the profession could bring insights into the depth of resilience of this population.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to examine the resilience of positive experienced teachers with more than five years in the profession. Through the lens of self-determination theory, positive experienced teachers in the study articulated their experiences building the mechanisms they use to stay positive and resilient in their school communities in the face of challenging circumstances. The data provided by study participants was coded and grouped into four themes: resilience through community, personal reflection, healthy boundaries, and intrinsic motivation. Relayed through a journal prompt, individual interviews, and focus groups, 15 teacher participants from elementary, middle, and high school from 12 different content areas and four different continents attributed their resilience largely to their internal motivation to support and provide learning environments that connect and challenge students. Teachers aiming to remain in their profession and continue growing might consider seeking out positive experienced teachers for formal or informal support.

This qualitative study collected and examined the lived experience of teachers with longer tenure in school systems to determine how they made it through their years in teaching when up to half of all beginning teachers leave the profession within five years (Guthery & Bailes, 2022; Towers et al., 2022; Wiggan et al., 2020). Any teachers with more than five years of teaching experience who have remained positive were eligible to contribute their experiences to the study. Their lived experiences were recorded and used to develop a picture of the development of resilience of positive experienced teachers. Teachers can continue at the same

or higher level after challenges when they clearly know why they teach and enjoy it. Seeing the whole picture allows them to move past temporary difficulties and continue their love of teaching. Positive experienced teachers face the same stressors as all teachers while primarily relying on intrinsic motivation by frequently revisiting their reasons for teaching to overcome its difficulties and remain positive and engaged. Identifying and relying on positive experienced teachers can bolster the school environment. While further research should be conducted, it seems clear that positive experienced teachers have valuable insights into remaining resilient and engaged in their school communities.

Declarations

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Ethics Statements

The framework for this study was approved by Liberty University's Institutional Review Board.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest for this study.

Informed Consent

The participants in this study were informed of their rights and agreed to participate of their own volition.

Data availability

The data from this study is confidential and unavailable due to the conditions for approval by Liberty University's Institutional Review Board.

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Appendix A: Positive Experienced Teacher Inventory

1. It is important to me to incorporate change and innovation in my classroom and assessment practices	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
2. It is important to me to be a positive role model for other teachers	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
3. I feel unsettled by the expectation of regularly applying new ideas in my teaching	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
4. I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when actively engaged in my classroom	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
5. It is important to me to seek out new ideas	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
6. It is important to me to mentor young and beginning teachers	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
7. I seek out new ideas to incorporate directly into my teaching and assessment practices	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
8. I believe my past and current teaching achievements in my workplace are undervalued.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
9. I would be uncomfortable leading change and innovation to teaching practices within my school.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
10. I feel comfortable in myself as a respected professional.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
11. I actively seek out new professional development opportunities to improve my teaching.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
12. I feel unsettled by changes to the established teaching and assessment practices I use in my classroom.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
13. I feel I am a risk-taker in my teaching practice.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
14. I perceive myself to be a person of value in my school.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
15. I take leadership roles to support change and innovation in my school.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7
16. I am comfortable at incorporating new teaching and assessment practices in my classroom.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5-6	7

Note. Positive Veteran Teacher Inventory. Reprinted from Positive veteran teachers: Who are they, and where are they to be found? by Lowe, G., Gray, C., Prout, P., Jefferson, S., & Shaw, T. (2019). *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(3), 823–840.

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Appendix B: Data Collection Questions

Journal Prompt: Please define the word “resilience” in your own words and explain the ways it relates to your experiences and practices as a teacher.




Individual Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me why you decided to become a teacher.
2. Teaching is a challenging profession that has the possibility of profoundly affecting students and other members of the school community. What sticks out to you as the low points in your teaching career and of what are you most proud?
3. What difficult challenges have you encountered that threatened your commitment to teaching?
4. What allowed you to stand up to these difficulties and respond in life-giving ways?
5. What foundational elements in your life aid you in bouncing back from adverse circumstances in the teaching profession?
6. What motivates you to continue in the teaching profession?
7. What would cause you to leave the teaching profession other than retirement?
8. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give beginning teachers on navigating the first five years of teaching?

Focus Group Questions:

1. What specifically do you, as teachers, do to recover from adverse situations?
2. What enables you, as teachers, to remain positive in the profession rather than develop a cynical, dispassionate approach?
3. What advice from your experiences would you give to teachers entering the profession about overcoming the difficulties of teaching and remaining positive?
4. This study examines experienced teachers’ resilience. Is there anything else we should discuss or ask about?

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	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	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

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Mothers' Experience of Home Education with Their Children during COVID-19: A Qualitative Systematic Review*

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Abstract

Purpose: One of the areas most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic has been education. The pandemic has significantly affected teaching-learning processes and caused various challenges. This process has brought a significant burden of care, especially for families with children. According to the studies, although the responsibilities and roles of parents have increased in the process, it has been observed that mothers have undertaken this more than fathers. This study aims to understand mothers' experiences of being a teacher-mother and the development of their children's educational processes according to the findings of the studies based on how mothers experienced their children's educational processes at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method: In this study, which is carried out according to the qualitative systematic review design, 13 studies meeting the preset criteria are analysed. While analysing the data, thematic analysis recommended for systematic reviews is utilised/used.

Findings: In this study, even though the process offered some limited opportunities, it is concluded that the mothers felt many responsibilities, experienced feelings that arose from the uncertainty such as fear, anxiety, and guilt, and undertook the responsibility of being a pedagogical and working mother and faced a lot of difficulties/hardships.

Implications: When distance education is needed for various reasons in the future, it is among the recommendations of the study to make planning by considering the experiences of mothers.

Keywords

COVID-19 pandemic, home education, motherhood, qualitative systematic review

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound psychological, physical, and economic impacts globally, heavily affecting education systems, especially health. One of the most significant changes was the suspension of face-to-face education and the urgent implementation of distance education. Alan and Can (2021) emphasized that this disruption was almost global, catching schools, teachers, and families off guard. The sudden shift to remote learning negatively affected families, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, increasing inequalities among children (Erdemci & Elçiçek, 2022).

Education was one of the most affected areas during the pandemic. Systematic reviews indicated that the pandemic significantly disrupted teaching and learning processes, presenting numerous challenges for all stakeholders, including parents (Betthäuser et al., 2023). Parents, particularly working ones, had to take on the dual responsibilities of work and childcare, leading to increased stress and difficulty (Heggeness, 2020). Studies showed that parents assumed new roles in their children's education, acting as teachers, facilitators, motivators, and guides during the remote learning process (Krisnawati, 2020).

During home education, parents facilitated their children's learning by explaining COVID-19 and its dangers, offering various learning and play activities, and communicating with teachers for guidance. They also relied on technology like TV and mobile phones as learning tools. Krisnawati (2020) identified four key roles parents played: 1) acting as a teacher by monitoring learning and creating a conducive environment, 2) serving as facilitators by providing infrastructure for distance learning, 3) being motivators, and 4) guiding children in their educational journey.

The pandemic created a significant burden on families, with many reporting difficulties adjusting to the new distance education system, especially for younger children and those with special needs (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). Parental stress levels rose notably during the pandemic. This increased stress, combined with the added responsibility of home teaching, disproportionately affected mothers. Mothers were often more involved in their children's education than fathers, frequently taking on the roles of both teacher and caregiver (Bakiler & Kurtça, 2021; Burns et al., 2023).

The unequal distribution of responsibilities between mothers and fathers during the pandemic highlighted existing gender inequalities. Studies found that, even among highly educated and dual-career couples, mothers carried a disproportionate share of childcare and household responsibilities (Çakmak Otluoğlu et al., 2021). This was particularly true even in countries known for gender equality, such as Scandinavian nations. Despite advancements in women's rights, societal expectations still pressured mothers to manage both work and childcare responsibilities during quarantine periods (Condon et al., 2024).

Research on mothers during the pandemic explored various topics, including the physical and mental health of mothers, first-time motherhood, stress, trauma, and caring for children with developmental disabilities (Bakiler & Kurtça, 2021). Mothers experienced physical and emotional exhaustion as they tried to balance the dual demands of work and home education (Bastain et al., 2022). In particular, mothers took on greater responsibility for ensuring their children's safety and continued education during the pandemic. For example, Kinser et al. (2022) examined women's experiences during pregnancy and childbirth in the pandemic. The

study revealed that mothers faced increased challenges and that health systems were inadequate in supporting them. Another study by Condon et al. (2024) investigated how the pandemic affected families with preschool children in terms of family roles and routines. The findings showed that families had both positive and negative experiences, but the stress of disrupted routines strained both immediate and extended family relationships. Moon et al. (2021) focused on the changing experiences of mothers with elementary school-aged children in Korea during the pandemic. In-depth interviews with 10 mothers revealed that while many felt fatigue and stress, the crisis also led to positive family growth as they adapted to new roles.

The studies conducted on mothers during the pandemic involved women from different countries, with children of varying ages and in different educational stages. These studies revealed diverse experiences, but one common theme was the increased burden placed on mothers. Working mothers found it challenging to balance their professional duties with the educational needs of their children. These difficulties varied depending on family structure, the number of children, and the mother's job and working status. In many cases, mothers faced conflict between their roles as employees and caregivers, leading to feelings of inadequacy and stress (Hoskins & Wainwright, 2023). The experiences shared by mothers across different studies indicate that, despite the challenges, many were able to adapt to the new demands placed on them. However, the added responsibilities of home education, combined with pre-existing societal expectations, often resulted in emotional and physical strain. A more comprehensive evaluation of these experiences is needed to understand the full impact of the pandemic on mothers' roles in education.

This study aims to systematically review qualitative research on mothers' experiences of their children's educational processes at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How did mothers experience the role of being a "teacher mother" during the pandemic?
2. According to mothers, how did their children's educational processes evolve during the pandemic?

Method

Research Design

This study, which aims to examine studies based on how mothers experienced the education processes of their children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, is conducted in accordance with the qualitative systematic review design. A systematic review enables to reveal what is known and unknown about a topic based on the literature (Gough & Thomas, 2016). This design is a systematic process governed by clear and demanding rules to ensure freedom from bias, transparency, and accountability (Dixon-Woods, 2011). Only quantitative studies, only qualitative studies, only mixed methods studies, or studies with different understandings can be subjected to systematic review. In this study, qualitative studies were examined. Since the focus of this study was to reveal the experiences of mothers holistically during the pandemic, it was decided that it was appropriate to include qualitative studies in the review.

Search Strategy

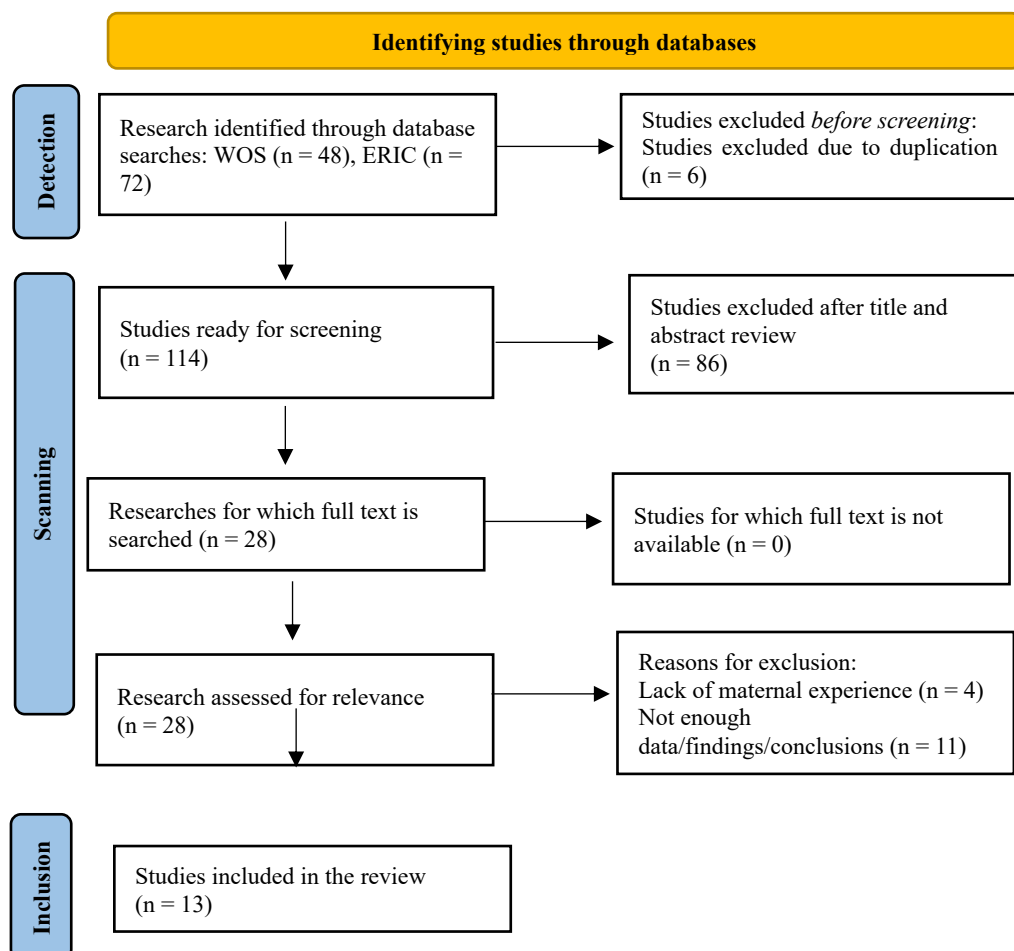
In order to identify the studies to be included in the review, it was decided to search the Web of Science (WOS) and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) databases. The last search in these databases was made on 05.07.2023. "COVID-19" and "MOTHER" were determined as keywords. Within the scope of the search, firstly, studies that included these keywords were accessed.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The studies to be examined within the scope of the study were determined in accordance with the PRISMA (The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The diagram created according to PRISMA is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Flow Diagram of the Studies Included in the Systematic Review



As seen in Figure 1, a total of 120 studies, 48 in WOS and 72 in ERIC, were identified after the search. Six of these studies were excluded as they reoccurred in different databases and 114 studies were screened. Having reviewed the title and abstract, 86 studies found to be unfit for the purpose of the study were eliminated. After this elimination, the full text of 28 studies was evaluated for eligibility. After the elimination due to not including the experience of mothers whose children received distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic ($n = 4$) and not containing enough data/findings/results ($n = 11$), 13 studies were found suitable for review. The studies to be included in the study were determined in accordance with the following criteria:

- Reporting in English or Turkish
- Published in a refereed journal indexed in WOS and ERIC databases
- Being research directly examining the experience of a mother whose child received distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Realization in compliance with the qualitative research approach

Quality Assessment

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) developed by Hong et al. (2018) is used to assess the quality of the studies to be included in the review. According to the matrix of the tool, methodological quality criteria for qualitative research items were marked as Yes, No, and Unspecified. Table 1 provides a brief description of this assessment.

Table 1

MMAT to Assess the Quality of Studies (Hong et al., 2018)*

Article No*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	QR
Publication						
1.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
2.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
3.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
4.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
5.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
6.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
7.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
8.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
9.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
10.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
11.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
12.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H
13.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	H

* For each item: Yes (Y) = 1; No (N) = 0; Not specified (N) = 0.5. Quality rating (QR): Low (L) = 1-2; Medium (M) = 3; High (H) = 4-5.

Items: 1. Does the qualitative approach answer the research question? 2. Is the qualitative data collection method appropriate to the research question? 3. Are the findings obtained by using the collected data? 4. Are the

interpretations made in accordance with the data? 5. Are the sources of qualitative data, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data related to each other?

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the studies included in the review respond to the qualitative approach research question, the qualitative data collection method is appropriate to the research question, the findings are obtained with the collected data, the interpretations are made in accordance with the data, and the sources of qualitative data, data collection, analysis, and interpretation are interrelated. It was concluded that all 13 articles were of high quality and it was decided to include these in the review.

Data Analysis

The study's data analysis is conducted following the thematic analysis recommended by Thomas and Harden (2008) for qualitative systematic reviews. Accordingly, with an inductive approach, the researchers first coded the data and identified the initial themes that would be explanatory. Afterwards, more inclusive analytical themes were created and the findings were interpreted by supporting them with direct quotations from the analyzed studies. Data analysis was conducted using the MaxQDA 2020 qualitative data analysis programme.

To ensure the reliability of the themes obtained, the data were first analyzed by two researchers. Then, the researchers conducted interviews and made changes until they reached a consensus on the preliminary themes. At this stage, the preliminary themes of being a teacher-mother, distance learning, home environment, and development of the process were grouped under two more comprehensive themes. With the inclusion of the third researcher in the analysis process, the themes and sub-themes were finalized. Thus, two themes emerged: "mothers' experience of being a teacher mother in the pandemic" and "development of children's education processes in the pandemic." Mothers' experience of being a teacher mother in the pandemic was examined under the sub-themes of emotions, responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities. development of children's education processes in the pandemic emerged within the sub-themes of uncertainty and acceptance and adaptation. Direct quotations from relevant articles have been used for themes and sub-themes, and references to the articles have been made using a coding system such as A1: Article 1.

Findings

Within the scope of the study, 13 articles were found suitable for systematic review. Summary information about the articles subjected to qualitative systematic review is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Studies Included in the Review

Attribution	Country	Participants	Design	Data collection tool	Purpose of the study	Key findings
Bakiler and Kurtça (2021)	Türkiye	11 mothers	General qualitative research	Interview	To examine the experiences of students preparing for the High School Transition System from the perspective of mothers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the family, mothers followed the exam process. • Schools have adapted quickly. • The school counseling service did not meet expectations. • The steps taken by MoNE have made the process easier.
Miller and Riley (2022)	USA	134 academic mothers, 7 academic fathers	Unspecified	Survey	To determine the work-life conflict experiences of academic mothers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic fathers reduced work-life conflict by prioritizing one role, while academic mothers experienced significant work-life conflict during the pandemic.
Bailey (2022)	England	4021 posts in 358 discussion threads	Unspecified	Website shares	Examining the relationship between pandemic school closures and intensive motherhood ideology through posts in an online motherhood community on learning during lockdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive motherhood is normalized. • Mothers reacted to the normalization of intensive motherhood.
Koželuhová et al. (2021)	Czechia	6 mothers	Descriptive multiple case	Interview	To describe the experiences of parents with children who learned to read and write through distance learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance learning did not affect the quality of children's acquisition of reading and writing techniques but slowed it down. • Distance education has placed additional physical and mental demands for mothers.
Park et al. (2021)	USA	22 mothers	Qualitative	Interview	Examining mother's experiences of supporting their children's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers saw themselves as strong mothers who assumed various roles (teacher, friend, caregiver, healthcare provider, etc.).

Attribution	Country	Participants	Design	Data collection tool	Purpose of the study	Key findings
					distance learning during the pandemic.	
Hoskins and Wainwright (2023)	England	6 mothers	Qualitative	Interview	To identify how education and care at home was provided during the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers did not consider themselves good enough or educated enough to support their children. • Providing quality digital devices and internet connectivity has been difficult during the pandemic.
Burns et al. (2023)	Canada	350 mothers	Unspecified	Survey	To identify the experiences and challenges faced by low-income families regarding their children's educational experiences at home during the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families had difficulty coping with homeschooled children during the pandemic. • A significant number of families found learning from home during the pandemic to be a positive experience.
San Jose et al. (2022)	Philippines	6 mothers	Interpretive phenomenology	Interview	To explore mothers' experiences of being a mother and teacher during the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers have experienced various difficulties. • Children were bored with the home education process and wanted to return to face-to-face education.
Szabo (2021)	USA	21 mothers	Case study	Interview	Determining mothers' preference processes for online or face-to-face education in the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers were relieved to have the option of online or face-to-face.
Hamad (2021)	Palestine	8 mothers	Case study	Interview	Uncovering the role of mothers during the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers were not prepared to deliver online education. • Inadequate/inconsistent access to technology.
Park and Kang (2022)	USA	4 mothers	Unspecified	Interview	Determining mothers' perceptions of changes in their parenting tasks and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was stated that the school and the teacher were not ready for distance education. • Mothers who were estranged from their

Attribution	Country	Participants	Design	Data collection tool	Purpose of the study	Key findings
					educational participation during the pandemic.	husbands emphasized the education of their children.
Öngören (2021)	Türkiye	19 parents	Case study	Interview	To examine parents' relationships with their children during the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive aspects: spending time together, sharing and communication. • Negative aspects: social isolation, family conflicts and cell phone addiction.
Aladsani (2022)	Saudi Arabia	12 mothers	Qualitative	Interview	To determine the experiences of female breadwinning parents and their children's experiences of distance education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problems are categorized under the headings of financial, social-cultural and educational problems.

The analysis of the 13 articles in Table 2 revealed two analytical themes: mothers' experience of being a teacher mother in the pandemic and development of children's education processes in the pandemic. The themes were explained by supporting them with quotations from the participant statements.

Mothers' Experience of Being a Teacher Mother in the Pandemic

One of the first questions sought to be answered in the research is about the experiences of mothers who experienced the education processes in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the findings of the studies examined within the scope of the research were analyzed; the experience of mothers as teacher mothers during the pandemic was examined under the sub-themes of emotions, responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities. It was determined that mothers experienced emotions such as fear, anxiety, and guilt arising from uncertainty during the pandemic. These participants expressed these emotions as "... I cannot cope ... my anxiety is very high. ... I don't know why I failed ... I feel like we are falling further behind every day ... I feel like I can't do this ... I feel very guilty that I can't cope with everything. It's very difficult (A3)."

During the pandemic, mothers' pedagogical and working mother responsibilities came to the fore. Mothers' pedagogical responsibilities included following the cognitive development of the child, being a mother who learns with the child, and communicating effectively. One mother described her pedagogical responsibility as follows: "My biggest trick - if I can call it that - is to involve myself with my daughter and tell her, 'Okay, we are both going to take/attend the

class. We're both taking the lesson class because I want to learn English and I can listen to the teacher when you're at the lesson.' and my daughter says: 'Mom, you are missing a lot. Come here, he is talking. Do you understand what she is saying?' ... (A5)". The challenges of working mothers during the pandemic differ in terms of working remotely at home and continuing to work outside the home. The difficulties experienced by mothers working from home are reflected in the participant's statements as follows: "People think that working from home is easier, but the reality is the opposite. I was working full-time and at the same time, I was a stay-at-home mom 24/7. There was no clear line between work and housework. I had to work from home from early morning until late evening while taking care of my daughter (A11)."

The main difficulties experienced by mothers during the pandemic process are categorized under the headings of being unfamiliar with the digital environment, attitude differences with their spouses, taking care of their children alone, keeping track of homework, difficulties arising from the home environment, and difficulties arising from educational institutions. Mothers frequently used the expression "I am not a teacher!" during the interviews. These views were expressed in the participant statements such as "We could not do the things that a teacher does (A1)." and "It was scary. It was very scary. I wanted to pull out what little hair I had, I'm not a teacher. ... I was in a constant state of war (A9)." The difficulties arising from educational institutions were reflected in the views of one mother as follows: "I don't think this education process contributed to the children. It was just a general repetition, to keep the children busy ... The lessons did not provide a new learning opportunity for the children; they only prevented forgetting by repeating what they already knew." (A1)

One mother expressed the problems arising from the physical environment of the home as follows: "Now we are at one dining table, I occupy one-third of the table, I need to have two monitors to work and my daughter is here for the other two-thirds, she needs space, she opens her exercise books and she is on the tablet..." (A4)

One of the difficulties experienced during the pandemic was defined as Internet quality and electronic device-related problems. Examples of the opinions of mothers regarding the difficulties they experienced related to this sub-theme are given below:

... it was working at first. But then it was lagging and not actually working properly ... I was really struggling with the internet ... It had to load for a very long time (A6)

I asked the school for a Kindle but they said they didn't have any... And I thought it was a bit unfair for the child to do something with a little phone - I mean we only have a little iPhone. (A4)

It was revealed that mothers mostly experienced negative emotions such as fear, undertook many responsibilities, and faced difficulties as well as a small number of opportunities that came to the fore during the distance education progress. Accordingly, the opportunities of the pandemic process were expressed by the mothers as strengthening family ties, getting to know the child better, reducing peer bullying, preventing time loss, improving digital skills, enabling students with special needs to benefit from education without moving, and focusing better on the exam. One participant stated that "It was an opportunity for all three of them to get to know each other (A1)." for her children and her husband, while the prominent opportunities in distance education were reflected in the views of other mothers as "We had the chance to spend more time together and get to know each other better because the number of things we shared

increased (A12)." and "... bullying was limited in distance education. Although there is cyberbullying, it cannot be compared to bullying in face-to-face learning (A13).".

Development of Children's Education Processes in the Pandemic

The other question sought to be answered in the research; according to the mothers, how the development of their children's education process was during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mothers' views on the development of their children's education process during the pandemic emerged within the sub-themes of uncertainty and acceptance and adaptation. These sub-themes explain the development of the process gradually. One participant expressed this process as follows: "At first there was a holiday atmosphere. ... Then another fourteen days. Then we realized that it would not open anymore. ... After we realized this and accepted that the process would continue like this, we prepared the program." (A1). One of the conflicts experienced during the uncertainty process was the health-success conflict. One mother's views on this situation are as follows: "I go back and forth between thinking that their well-being is the most important thing and stop stressing about school work and ... feeling under a lot of pressure to make sure they are still learning." (A3)

After accepting the process, it was observed that a planning was made. Some mothers expressed their views as follows: "... we prepared the program after we accepted that the process would continue like this (A1)." and "I immediately got prepared for home education. I was not surprised when our school was closed and started to provide distance education (A11)."

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this study, which aims to systematically examine qualitative research on mothers' experiences of their children's educational processes at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, 13 studies were analyzed. The result of the research revealed results about mothers' teacher mother experience and the development of their children's education process during the pandemic. As revealed in various studies, it was observed that mothers were more concerned about their children's education during the pandemic (Rohita, 2021). In this process, it is understood that fathers did not experience a conflict arising from dual role expectations and focused more on their profession (Miller & Riley, 2022), while mothers experienced this conflict more. Hence, important results were obtained by evaluating the research on mothers' experiences of their children's educational processes in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic with a holistic perspective.

The sub-themes of *emotions*, *responsibilities*, *challenges*, and *opportunities* that emerged as a result of the thematic analysis revealed mothers' experiences of being a teacher mother during the pandemic. Mothers stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they experienced feelings of uncertainty such as fear, anxiety, and guilt, undertook the responsibilities of being a pedagogical and working mother, experienced many challenges and that this process offered some opportunities, albeit limited. In Parczewska's (2020) study, some parents expressed their situation in the education process of their children at home during the pandemic with words such as anger, resentment, fear, helplessness, discouragement, feeling overwhelmed, confusion, loneliness, and disorganization. The sub-themes of uncertainty, and acceptance, and adaptation originated as a result of the analysis explained the development of children's educational

processes during the pandemic. In the uncertainty environment that emerged with the onset of the pandemic, there was a conflict between protecting health and continuing education, but after accepting the process, a plan was made and adaptation was achieved. Garbe et al. (2020) found that parents had difficulty balancing their work, household chores, and teaching responsibilities at the same time remotely.

The main difficulties experienced by mothers during the pandemic are being unfamiliar with the digital environment, attitude differences with their spouses, taking care of their children alone, keeping track of homework, difficulties arising from the home environment, and difficulties arising from educational institutions. These results overlap with the results of Hoskins and Wainwright (2023) and the statement "I am not a teacher!" was prominent in the mothers' opinions. In O'Reilly's (2020) study, the role of mothers was expressed as "achieving the impossible" and "carrying an unbearable burden". It was also observed that the difficulties experienced by mothers differed according to the special conditions of mothers and their children. These difficulties differ according to the number of children in education, the age of the child, the mother's employment status, and the job she does. Mothers' employment status and work can be facilitating factors in some cases, but in other cases, they can increase the difficulties experienced as they involve additional responsibilities. Mothers who work from home reported that they faced problems when they had to be online at the same time as their children's class hours, torn between work and supporting their children's education. In Parczewska's (2020) study, parents in the role of teachers stated that despite all their efforts during the pandemic, they could not cope with tasks beyond their abilities and their children's stress. In Türk and Kiroğlu's (2022) study, classroom teachers stated that parents' home education workload increased during the distance education process during the pandemic compared to face-to-face education.

Some mothers stated that the lack of adequate support from the institutions where their children study and the teachers and the lack of clear explanation of the tasks to be done are among the factors that increase the uncertainty and the difficulty experienced in this process. Especially, the lack of previous distance education experience or limited experience of schools is one of the important reasons for this difficulty, as stated in the results of Ganji et al. (2024). In Parczewska's (2020) study, 48.92% of the Polish parents who participated reported that they experienced difficulties at home during the pandemic, 34.55% reported that teaching their children at home was a very difficult situation and 32.73% reported that they thought that teaching their children at home was beyond their abilities. Garbe et al. (2020) found that one of the most notable barriers for parents to support their children's education at home is their lack of pedagogy and content knowledge.

One of the noteworthy aspects of the mothers' opinions was the opportunities that came to the fore during the distance education process. These are expressed as strengthening family ties, getting to know the child more closely, reducing peer bullying, preventing time loss, developing digital skills, enabling students with special needs to benefit from education without moving, and focusing better on the exam. The fact that families said they got to know each other better can be considered an important positive outcome of this process. Another noteworthy result is that this process created a supportive environment for children to prepare for exams. In particular, the statement that peer bullying decreases stands out as it shows that children are exposed to peer bullying in face-to-face education.

When the development of the process is analyzed, it is seen that there initially was an uncertainty.. During this process, the conflict between protecting health and continuing education stood out as an important tension. Over time, it is observed that the process was accepted, and an attempt was made to adapt. It was reflected in the mothers' opinions that education processes were continued by making a plan.

The process of becoming a woman or a man starts with biological sex and is shaped by learning social expectations such as social roles. Especially in the historical process, female identity has been defined by symbols related to childbearing and motherhood (Gillespie 1999, cited in Salman Yıkımsı, 2018). Motherhood is one of the most important variables that play a role in determining social status in societies (Deliktaş et al., 2015). Korucu (2019) draws attention to the fact that motherhood is a phenomenon that embodies many contradictions and binary oppositions, especially as a multidimensional concept after the transition from a matriarchal to a patriarchal structure.

When the studies examined in the research and the results obtained are evaluated holistically, it is noteworthy that there are commonalities in mothers' experiences alongside cultural differences. The articles examined reflect the experiences of mothers from different countries. However, the emergence of common themes from these studies and the similarity of participants' statements can be interpreted as indicating that mothers' experiences of home education with their children during COVID-19 involved similar processes.

In this study, the studies accessed through WOS and ERIC databases were examined. Therefore, the results are limited to the results of the studies obtained from the publications in these databases. In new research, studies accessed from different databases can be subjected to a qualitative systematic review. A qualitative systematic review was conducted on mothers' experiences of their children's educational processes at home during the COVID-19 pandemic in this study. The difficulties experienced by mothers in this process and the development of the process were revealed from a holistic perspective. In the future, when distance education is required for various reasons, planning can be made by taking into account the mothers' experiences.

Declarations

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Ethics Statements

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest in relation to this publication.

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The Transferability of Teacher Characteristics in the Transition to School Leadership

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the characteristics developed through teaching that are retained, adapted, or discarded when teachers transition into school leadership roles. The purpose is to explore how these traits influence leadership practice and professional identity.

Method: A qualitative research design was employed. Data were collected via an open-ended online survey administered to 83 school principals across 36 provinces in Türkiye. Participant responses were systematically analyzed through content analysis.

Findings: Findings reveal four primary themes related to the transferability of teacher characteristics: (1) all should be transferred, (2) some should be transferred, (3) certain traits should not be transferred, and (4) none should be transferred. Most principals highlighted the importance of human competencies (e.g., empathy, fairness), technical skills (e.g., classroom management, planning), and leadership qualities (e.g., instructional and visionary leadership). A minority group cautioned against transferring traits such as excessive familiarity, irritability, or indifference. The findings align with Parsons' Role Theory and reflect Bridges' concept of the "neutral zone," indicating that transition involves partial transformation rather than complete role abandonment. This study provides a theoretically informed empirical contribution to understanding career transitions in educational leadership.

Keywords

teacher-to-leader transition, school leadership, role theory, career transition, instructional leadership, qualitative research

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Introduction

In Türkiye, school leadership is not recognized as a distinct profession but as a supplementary role assumed alongside teaching. School administrators are typically selected and appointed from among teachers (Aslanargun, 2011; Recepoğlu & Kılınç, 2014; Aslan & Gül, 2021; Balcı, 2021). This practice is rooted in the belief that “the essence of the profession is teaching,” whereby success and seniority in teaching are regarded as key criteria for administrative appointments (Ağaoğlu et al., 2012). Bursalıoğlu (2002) challenges this assumption, arguing that being an effective teacher does not necessarily translate into administrative success. He identifies the emergence of a “teacher-administrator” profile resulting from this flawed logic. Similarly, Aslanargun (2011) notes that educational leadership continues to be treated as an extension of teaching, allowing administrators to return to classroom roles when needed. This enduring approach raises a critical question: Which teaching characteristics are carried over into school leadership, and how does this continuity sustain the existing system?

Most school principals begin their careers as classroom teachers. However, not all teachers view leadership as a desirable trajectory—some prefer to remain in instructional roles, while others see school administration as a step forward in their professional development. Riveros et al. (2013) suggest that many teachers hesitate to pursue formal leadership roles due to concerns about losing their connection with teaching and learning. Nonetheless, teachers often develop leadership capacities within the classroom that may later be exercised in broader school contexts. In some cases, these skills serve as a foundation for formal leadership roles (Riveros et al., 2013). Armstrong (2009) argues that transitioning from teaching to school leadership constitutes a major professional and organizational shift, offering new aspirations and opportunities for transformation. Barnett et al. (2012) similarly describe a cognitive shift that occurs when educators move their focus from the classroom to the school-wide level.

The international literature has examined the teacher-to-leader transition from various perspectives: transitions from assistant principal to principal, the experiences of novice school leaders Armstrong, (2009, 2010, 2014, 2015; Shoho & Barnett, 2010), entry into and exit from the principalship (Shen et al., 1999), transitions from teacher leadership to formal administration (Hohner & Riveros, 2017), and transitions to departmental leadership roles (Jaca, 2021). Other studies have focused on generational perspectives on these transitions (Stone-Johnson, 2014) and challenges in recruiting and retaining school leaders in rural areas (Wood et al., 2013).

National studies in Türkiye have also explored this transition from multiple angles. Bingül & Hacıfazlıoğlu (2011) investigated teachers’ aspirations for school leadership. Aslan and Gül (2021) identified career advancement and administrative experience as key motivations for teachers pursuing leadership roles. Sincar & Keser Özmantar (2017) examined how teachers’ perceptions evolve after transitioning to district-level leadership. While much of the existing research addresses the general experiences of newly appointed school leaders and the competencies they require, a noticeable gap remains regarding which specific teacher characteristics are transferred—or not—during the transition to school administration. This study aims to explore, from the perspective of school principals, which qualities rooted in teaching are carried over into leadership roles and which are left behind.

Theoretical Framework

The transition from teaching to school leadership is a significant career shift that can be examined through both career transition theories and the lens of social role change. This process involves not only a change in professional status but also a redefinition of roles within the broader social and institutional context. The theoretical framework of this research is grounded in three key frameworks: Talcott Parsons' (1951) Role Theory, Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory, and Ibarra's (2004) Career Transition Theory.

Talcott Parsons' Role Theory

In this study, the move from teaching to administration is conceptualized as a social role transition. Parsons' role theory, developed within a structural-functionalist paradigm, provides a valuable analytical lens through which to understand the systemic and normative implications of such a shift.

According to Parsons (1951), society functions as a structured system sustained by individuals who occupy various statuses, each associated with a set of socially defined roles. These roles are governed by expectations that contribute to both social order and institutional effectiveness. In this framework, teaching and administration are understood as distinct social statuses with corresponding role expectations.

This theoretical lens supports the central research question—namely, which characteristics should or should not be carried from teaching into school administration—through the following dimensions:

Status and Role Change: The transition requires adopting new roles that align with the administrator's status. While some roles associated with teaching may be retained and adapted, others must be relinquished in favor of leadership functions.

Adaptation to Social Norms: Each role is embedded within a network of social norms. The perspectives of school principals provide insights into which teacher-related behaviors conform to or diverge from the normative expectations of leadership.

Role Conflict and Role Strain: Certain traits stemming from a teacher's identity—such as over-familiarity, emotional reactivity, or student-centredness—may create tension or conflict when juxtaposed with the demands of administrative leadership.

Career Transition Theories

Career development literature encompasses a range of models that address role transitions. Latack (1984) distinguishes between three types: (a) intra-organizational, (b) inter-organizational, and (c) inter-professional transitions. The movement from teaching to administration often intersects all three. For instance, a teacher may become an assistant principal within the same institution, assume a leadership role in a different school, or transition into a new organizational context altogether.

Ibarra's (2004) Career Transition Theory conceptualizes career change as a process influenced by shifts in action, identity, learning, and relationships. This theory is particularly useful in

examining the internal and external dynamics that shape the extent to which teacher characteristics are retained or redefined in leadership roles.

Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory offers a psychological model of change, comprising three stages:

Ending: Individuals disengage from their prior identity—in this case, the teacher role. This study examines whether school leaders fully disentangle themselves from this identity or retain elements of it.

Neutral Zone: This is a liminal period marked by uncertainty and role experimentation. It raises the question of whether principals immediately adopt new administrative behaviors or gradually transform existing practices.

New Beginning: This phase signifies the internalization of a new identity. The study examines how principals begin to embody their leadership role and whether this involves discarding or reshaping former teacher characteristics.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust framework for analyzing how teacher identity, skills, and dispositions are negotiated during the shift to school leadership. They also provide conceptual clarity on the potential tensions, adaptations, and transformations that may arise during this professional journey.

Method

This study employed a qualitative methodology to investigate school principals' perceptions of the transfer of teacher characteristics into leadership roles. Qualitative research enables the examination of social phenomena within their natural contexts by focusing on participants' subjective meanings and experiences using non-numerical data (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, a basic qualitative design—also referred to as general or interpretive qualitative research—was adopted to gain insight into how individuals interpret and make sense of their professional transitions.

Participants

Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method with a maximum variation approach (Patton, 2015), which aims to identify shared patterns across a wide range of perspectives. The study's participant group consisted of 83 school principals working at different levels of education across 36 provinces in Turkey, with varying degrees of professional and administrative experience.

School level: 21.7% served in middle schools, 33.7% in high schools, and 44.6% in primary schools.

Gender distribution: The study comprised 25.3% female participants and 74.7% male participants.

Educational qualifications: 48.2% held a bachelor's degree, 49.4% a master's degree, and 2.4% a doctoral degree.

Professional experience: 26.5% had 7–18 years of experience, 62.7% had 19–30 years, and 10.8% had more than 31 years of experience.

Administrative experience: 8.4% had 0–3 years, 20.5% had 4–6 years, 48.2% had 7–18 years, 19.3% had 19–30 years, and 3.6% had more than 31 years of experience as school principals.

Data Collection

Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University's Social & Human Sciences Ethics Committee (Protocol No: E-62310886-605.99-123723). Data were collected through an online qualitative survey using Google Forms.

Online qualitative surveys enable participants to articulate their experiences, practices, and perspectives in their own words, thereby generating rich and nuanced data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As Jansen (2010) notes, qualitative surveys are particularly well-suited for capturing the diversity of opinions within a target population and revealing meaningful variation among individuals who share specific characteristics.

The decision to use an online format was driven by the objective of maximizing sample diversity, providing flexibility, and accessing a geographically dispersed group of participants. As Braun et al. (2021) argue, online qualitative surveys are particularly effective for reaching hard-to-reach populations and gathering broad perspectives within limited time frames. In this study, the use of this method enabled the collection of data from school principals across 36 different provinces.

Participants were asked open-ended questions, such as: "In your opinion, which teacher's characteristics should be carried over when transitioning into a leadership role, and which should not? Why? Please explain." The call for participation was disseminated through professional associations and social media platforms. All responses were downloaded in Excel format for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which facilitates the systematic identification and interpretation of patterns and meanings in qualitative data (Patton, 2015). The analysis process followed the stages proposed by Marshall and Rossman (2011): initial organization and coding of responses, generation of preliminary themes, and refinement into finalized themes and subthemes. Following the thematic analysis, the findings were visualized and synthesized into a structured narrative. Direct participant quotations were included to illustrate each theme and its corresponding subthemes. As emphasized by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), visual data representation supports interpretation, validation, and further analytical engagement with the material.

Findings

The findings of the study, derived from the perspectives of 83 school principals, revealed a diverse set of opinions regarding which teacher characteristics should or should not be

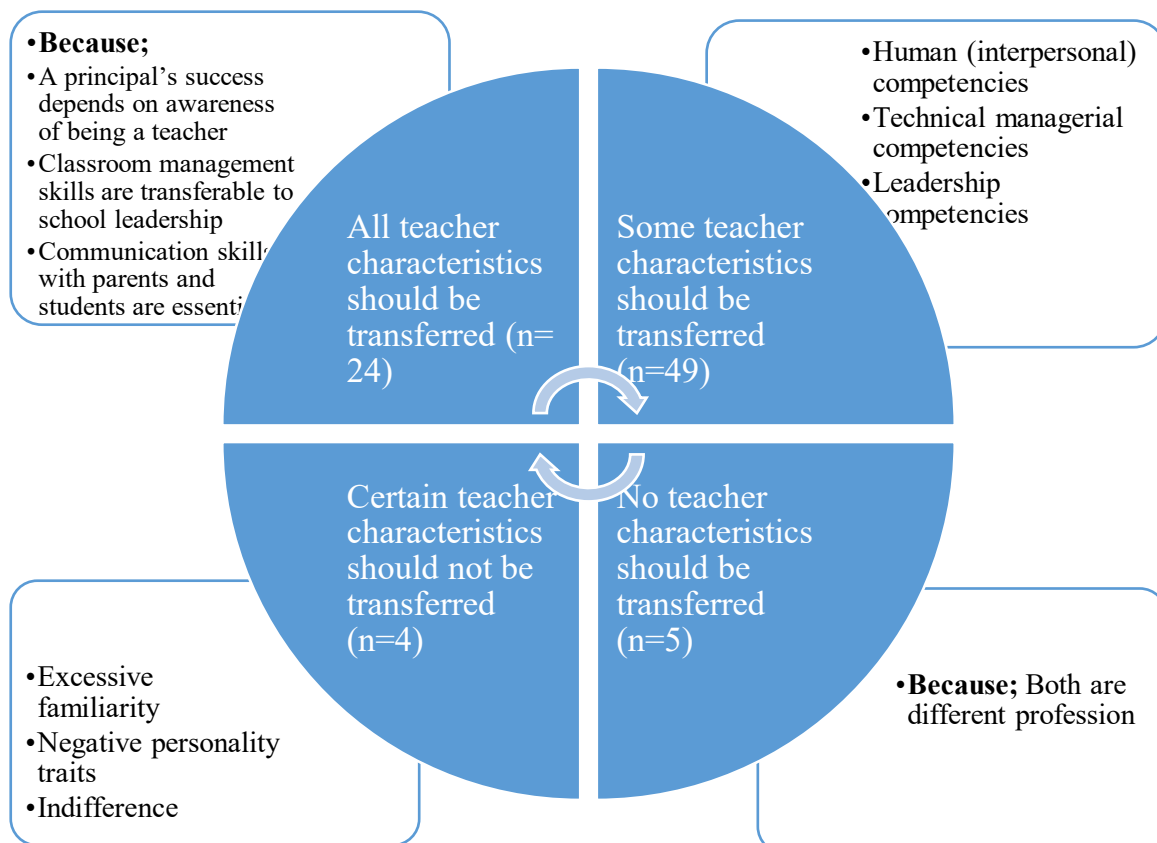
transferred into administrative roles. The responses were classified under four thematic categories:

- All teacher characteristics should be transferred.
- Some teacher characteristics should be transferred.
- Certain teacher characteristics should not be transferred.
- No teacher characteristics should be transferred.

These categories were conceptually mapped on a spectrum to demonstrate the variety of perspectives (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Principals' Views on the Transferability or not Transferability of Teacher Characteristics to School Leadership



Additionally, the justifications provided by participants for transferring or not transferring particular traits were analyzed and categorized (see Figure 2).

All Teacher Characteristics Should Be Transferred

A significant portion of participating principals—particularly those serving in primary schools—expressed the view that all teacher characteristics should be retained and carried over during the transition to school leadership. A few middle and high school principals also supported this position. While some respondents emphasized a wholesale transfer of teacher competencies, others noted that specific traits, such as self-sacrifice, should not only be preserved but also further developed in administrative practice.

This perspective is illustrated in the following participant statements:

KM26: “You cannot be a good administrator without first being a good teacher.”

KM42: “All qualities that a teacher should have must also be present in a school administrator.”

KM43: “Administrators should have teaching experience. They must have breathed the atmosphere of the classroom and the teachers’ lounge.”

KM40: “Self-sacrifice should not only be transferred but increased.”

These views were further clarified through three sub-themes, which together form the rationale behind the belief that teacher characteristics are essential to effective leadership.

a) A Principal’s Success Depends on Awareness of Being a Teacher

Many principals argued that leadership effectiveness is rooted in a strong sense of teacher identity. According to them, maintaining this identity helps principals stay grounded in the core mission of schools: teaching and learning.

KM17: “A good school principal can only be successful if they maintain a teacher’s perspective in their attitudes, decisions, and approaches toward both the school and the students.”

KM30: “A good principal must possess the characteristics of a teacher.”

KM35: “Someone whose teaching skills are not above average should not become a school administrator.”

b) Classroom Management Skills Are Transferable to School Leadership

Several participants underscored that classroom management experience provides a foundational skill set that aligns well with the responsibilities of school leadership. These skills, including authority, planning, and regulation, were seen as directly adaptable.

KM3: “Experience gained in classroom management enhances the value of administrator-student relationships. Additionally, professional competencies such as knowledge of regulations and committee experience offer advantages for school leadership.

KM34: “The teacher’s command in the classroom aligns with the competencies required for effective school management. Skills in guiding parents and students are equally relevant. I believe all qualities from teaching should be transferred into leadership, with leadership-specific traits added.”

KM41: “A teacher who can effectively manage a classroom can also effectively manage a school.”

c) Communication Skills with Parents and students Are Essential

Principals frequently cited communication with students and parents as one of the most valuable assets teachers bring into leadership roles. These skills were not only considered transferable but also indispensable for creating a connected and responsive school environment.

KM3: “These skills must be transferred. We are still in the same institutions, still working with students. We must lead by example, not just words.”

KM10: “Teachers possess detailed knowledge about their students, including their socio-economic status. When transitioning to leadership, they should be able to analyze and understand the behavior of all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents.

KM69: “Emotional sensitivity, the ability to build strong relationships with parents and a drive for continuous self-improvement should be maintained. Teachers should expand their classroom-focused perspective into a broader school vision. A principal must remain an integral part of the school community and act with the awareness that they and their decisions are integral to the educational process.

Certain Teacher Characteristics That Should Be Transferred

In contrast to the view that all teacher characteristics should be carried into school leadership, a large group of principals argued for a more selective transfer of competencies. These respondents emphasized that certain human, technical, and leadership-oriented traits developed in teaching roles are particularly relevant for effective school administration.

One principal encapsulated this view by stating:

KM29: “School leadership is a broader and more legally defined role than classroom management. Communication comes first. It varies by school type, but a leader must have technical, human, and conceptual competencies and skills. Otherwise, administrators function merely as bureaucrats unless they also understand the curriculum and instruction.”

Based on their responses, the transferable teacher characteristics were grouped into three broad domains:

- Human (interpersonal) competencies
- Technical managerial competencies
- Leadership competencies

These dimensions are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Characteristics Considered Important for Transfer into School Leadership Roles

Human Competencies	Technical Competencies	Leadership Competencies
Effective communication	Knowledge of educational legislation	Instructional leadership
Sharing	Awareness of student-related issues	Team leadership
Democratic behavior	Classroom management	Visionary thinking
Love and respect	Discipline	Passion and enthusiasm
Being a role model	Organizational and planning skills	
Openness, tolerance, empathy	Problem-solving, responsibility	
Sense of belonging	Curriculum and instruction knowledge	
Humility, fairness, kindness	Inclusiveness, proactivity, equity	
Willingness to volunteer	High motivation and perseverance	

Human Competencies

Principals strongly emphasized the importance of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, particularly in a profession centered on people, such as education. Characteristics

such as communication, empathy, patience, fairness, and respect were frequently mentioned as essential traits that leaders should possess.

KM1: “They should carry communication skills, a sharing attitude, and democratic personality traits.”

KM36: “Principals must act carefully, clearly, and consistently—and love must be prioritized.”

KM64: “Empathy is a quality that both teachers and administrators should possess. In a human-centered institution, empathy enhances the feeling of being valued & ultimately contributes to happiness.”

KM65: “Respect, empathy, tolerance, love, innovation, hard work, flexibility, and leadership are necessary. Managing a school is not easy; you must motivate diverse people and solve their problems effectively.”

Technical Competencies

Participants highlighted a range of practical and managerial skills that teachers develop over time, which can significantly contribute to effective leadership when transferred. These include familiarity with legal frameworks, knowledge of curriculum, classroom management, and organizational discipline.

KM48: “If a teacher is highly motivated to take on a leadership role, this constitutes a significant advantage at the very beginning of their administrative journey.”

KM54: “Organization, leadership, guidance, understanding, being well-organized, honesty, and kindness are qualities that must be transferred.”

KM61: “A teacher who ensures real fairness for students can extend this sense of justice to the whole school.”

KM76: “A desire to teach and learn, self-development, openness to innovation, and work discipline must be transferred. Of course, fairness is also essential.”

Leadership Competencies

Finally, school principals placed strong emphasis on the transfer of leadership-related capacities. They argued that leadership is not exclusive to administrators, and many teachers already possess and exhibit leadership skills in their classrooms. Instructional leadership was particularly emphasized as a necessary and foundational component of school leadership. Representative quotations include:

KM5: “Leadership qualities should be present in both teachers and administrators.”

KM13: “Being visionary is essential. Enthusiasm is a must-have.”

KM15: “Those who possess leadership qualities, have mastery over regulations, and are constantly researching.”

KM11: “Those capable of providing instructional leadership should retain and transfer this capacity.”

KM22: “Their belief in the development of individuals should continue.”

In summary, findings indicate that principals value the transfer of specific competencies that align with effective interpersonal engagement, technical know-how, and strategic leadership. These competencies enable a smoother transition and enhance the administrator’s capacity to lead with both vision and empathy.

Characteristics That Should Not Be Transferred

A small number of school principals ($n = 4$) argued that certain teacher characteristics should be consciously excluded from school leadership roles, as they may hinder effective management or conflict with the expectations of the administrative position. These respondents did not oppose the transition from teaching to leadership per se but emphasized that not all aspects of teacher identity are compatible with administrative responsibilities.

Three key traits were identified as potentially problematic in leadership roles:

- Excessive familiarity: While relational closeness is often valued in teaching, some principals warned that over-familiarity with staff or students in leadership positions could lead to biased decision-making or perceived favoritism.
- Negative personality traits, such as irritability or vindictiveness, were viewed as incompatible with the emotional stability and fairness expected of a school leader.
- Indifference: A disengaged attitude, expressed in Turkish as "bananecilik"—meaning “not my problem”—was flagged as detrimental to collective responsibility in school management.

Illustrative statements include:

KM27: “Only excessive familiarity should not be transferred—it can be abused.”

KM32: “Traits like irritability and vindictiveness should not exist.”

KM40: “The ‘not my problem’ attitude should not be transferred.”

KM75: “Although the roles may seem similar, teaching and administration are very different tasks.”

These findings suggest a nuanced perspective among some principals, who recognize the importance of selecting and refining personal attributes to meet the unique challenges of school leadership.

No Teacher Characteristics Should Be Transferred

A distinct minority of principals—primarily those serving in high schools—expressed the view that none of the characteristics associated with teaching should be transferred to administrative roles. According to these respondents, teaching and school leadership represent entirely different professional domains, each requiring its own specific set of skills, competencies, and dispositions.

They argued that while teaching is centered on pedagogy and direct student engagement, leadership demands a more strategic, managerial, and visionary orientation that is not necessarily cultivated in the classroom.

Representative quotations include:

KM6: “Administration has almost nothing to do with teaching...”

KM9: “Teaching and administration are entirely different roles requiring distinct qualities...”

KM60: “...Because school leadership requires special talent.”

This group of respondents emphasized the importance of distinct professionalization of school leadership, challenging the long-standing assumption in Türkiye that effective teaching automatically prepares individuals for administrative positions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that a majority of school principals believe certain qualities developed during their teaching careers should be transferred into leadership roles. This perception aligns closely with Parsons' (1951) Role Theory, which asserts that individuals occupy different social statuses, each accompanied by associated roles. In cases of status transition—such as from teacher to principal—some roles are relinquished, while others may be retained if they are functionally compatible with the new position. In this study, principals often highlighted traits such as empathy, communication proficiency, classroom management expertise, a sense of justice, and leadership potential as competencies that not only endure but also enhance the effectiveness of the school leadership role.

At the same time, a smaller subset of principals advocated for a more distinct break from the teaching identity, citing the risk of role conflict and normative incongruence—both of which are fundamental concerns in Parsons' theory. Specifically, attributes such as excessive familiarity, emotional reactivity, and disengagement were seen as misaligned with the expectations of an effective school administrator.

High school principals, in particular, tended to view teaching and school leadership as separate professions, each demanding distinct sets of skills. This position supports the notion that school administration requires a unique form of professionalization—sometimes even described as requiring “special talents”—that cannot be derived directly from teaching experience alone.

From the perspective of Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory, most principals in the current study reflect a partial transition. Rather than abandoning their teaching identity altogether, they seem to carry forward select traits into their administrative role and reinterpret them within the context of leadership. This mirrors the “neutral zone” in Bridges' model, in which individuals reshape prior experiences while adjusting to new responsibilities.

Ibarra's (2004) Career Transition Theory also provides a useful interpretive lens. According to Ibarra, successful transitions involve experiential reapplication, relationship-based evolution, and action-driven learning—all of which were evident in how principals in this study described their continued use of classroom management techniques, instructional leadership approaches, and empathetic communication in leadership roles.

This study's findings are consistent with the work of Riveros et al. (2013), who argue that teachers often develop leadership capacities within their classrooms and later extend them into broader school contexts. Likewise, Barnett et al. (2012) emphasize the cognitive shift that occurs when educators begin to think beyond classroom boundaries and adopt a school-wide leadership mindset.

Additionally, participants noted that the Turkish education system, shaped by the belief that “teaching is the core profession,” tends to select administrators based on teaching seniority and success (Ağaoğlu et al., 2012). While Bursalıoğlu (2002) criticizes this approach as a logical

fallacy, Aslanargun (2011) points out that teaching remains the foundation of educational leadership, which is why administrators often return to teaching roles when needed.

Several principals in the study also justified the transfer of classroom management skills, echoing Aydın's (2010) view that the classroom and school are interdependent systems. From this perspective, the school serves as an extension of classroom leadership, and successful classroom practices can be scaled to the broader context of school management.

Another frequently emphasized justification involved transferring communication skills to parents and students. Principals viewed these relational competencies as essential for maintaining effective leadership and fostering a positive school culture. This is strongly supported by the literature, which identifies communication as a key factor in promoting quality education (Gülbahar, 2020), effective leadership (Hoy & Miskel, 2005), and a positive school climate (Afrasiabpour, 2019; Merlo, 2021; Rahmah, 2017).

In addition to retaining teacher traits, participants argued for the enhancement of specific characteristics in leadership roles—particularly fairness, humility, empathy, and egolessness. These attributes are consistent with research by Harris and Lambert (2003) and Reynolds (1996), both of whom underscore the ethical dimensions of school leadership. In the Turkish context, Sezgin et al. (2020) found that principals value justice, respect, and open communication in their daily practices.

Principals grouped the transferable qualities under three interrelated domains: human competencies, technical competencies, and leadership skills. This tripartite classification reflects Katz's (1955) foundational model of administrative effectiveness, which emphasizes the importance of technical, human, and conceptual skills. In line with this model, principals in this study indicated that collaboration, relational intelligence, and ethical sensitivity are just as critical as regulatory knowledge and organizational management.

Research by Akbaba-Altun (2007), Kakumanu (2021), and Effendi and Sahertian (2023) also supports the role of human skills in improving motivation, performance, and stakeholder engagement within schools.

Leadership capabilities, particularly instructional leadership, were also viewed as essential in the transition from teaching to administration. Participants emphasized the importance of school principals serving as pedagogical leaders, underscoring the notion that an educational vision, teacher support, and student achievement are key responsibilities of school leadership. These findings align with numerous studies that have linked instructional leadership to academic outcomes (Hallinger, 2010; Shatzer et al., 2014; Aydın & Sarier, 2016; Seashore Louis et al., 2010; O'Donnell & White, 2005).

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study has highlighted the positive traits that should be retained in school leadership, only a few principals mentioned undesirable characteristics that should be consciously avoided—such as excessive familiarity, irritability, vindictiveness, and indifference. These findings suggest the need for further research into the "negative traits" that may hinder effective school leadership. Identifying such traits can inform both leadership selection processes and

development programs, contributing to the cultivation of more emotionally intelligent and ethically grounded school leaders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transition from teaching to school leadership is not merely a procedural promotion, but a multifaceted transformation that involves reconfiguring identity, values, and competencies. Most principals in this study favored the retention and adaptation of essential teacher traits—particularly those rooted in human relationships, pedagogical expertise, and ethical conduct. These findings support the view that educational leadership is not only about managerial efficiency but also about maintaining a deep commitment to the core mission of education: teaching, learning, and human development.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest

Informed Consent

Consent was obtained from the participants through a consent form.

Data availability

Author has the data and open for the supervision.

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Qualitative Research Trends in Graduate Theses in Educational Sciences: A Study from Türkiye

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Abstract

Purpose: This study provided a comprehensive and longitudinal examination of the expansion and institutionalization of qualitative research methodologies within graduate theses in educational sciences in Türkiye, spanning the years 2000 to 2024.

Method: Utilizing a systematic analysis of the YÖKTEZ national theses database, the paper traced epistemological, methodological, and institutional shifts that have positioned qualitative inquiry as a central mode of knowledge production. Through a three-phase periodization and an in-depth account of research designs—including case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and action research—this study identified critical patterns, disruptions, and continuities.

Findings: The findings revealed not only exponential growth in the adoption of qualitative methods but also evolving understandings of methodological rigor, theoretical grounding, and ethical engagement. Despite increasing recognition, qualitative research often encounters hurdles in publication due to traditional biases favoring quantitative methodologies.

Implication: The discussion underscored the importance of fostering an academic environment that values and supports qualitative approaches. Thus, this article called for a paradigm-sensitive and epistemologically reflexive approach to graduate-level research, situating the trajectory of qualitative inquiry within the larger research trends and pedagogy of higher education in Türkiye.

Keywords

qualitative research, research paradigms, educational sciences, graduate theses

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Introduction

The role of qualitative research in educational sciences has gained increased legitimacy globally, particularly in contexts where traditional positivist frameworks have long dominated academic inquiry. This paradigmatic shift in Türkiye is not merely an internal academic evolution but reflects broader global debates concerning the epistemological positioning of educational science itself. As Yıldırım (2023) critically underscores, the historical divide between the Anglo-American and Continental European traditions has profoundly shaped the ontological and methodological foundations of educational research. The Anglo-American orientation, rooted in an applied and interdisciplinary understanding of education, predominantly relied on borrowing theories from psychology, sociology, and philosophy, often positioning education as a field without an independent theoretical core. This has led to a legacy where positivist methodologies were privileged, framing research in terms of generalizable principles and standardized practices. This theoretical distinction plays a crucial role in shaping the legitimacy and development of qualitative methodologies. Hsiung (2012), who claims that the globalization of qualitative research has often reinforced the dominance of Anglo-American epistemologies in peripheral contexts, made a similar argument. This dynamic has contributed to the replication of Western theories and methods in countries like Türkiye, rather than fostering the development of indigenous qualitative frameworks attuned to local realities.

The historical divide between the Anglo-American and Continental European traditions in qualitative research reflects distinct epistemological pathways shaped by geopolitical and cultural contexts. As Alasuutari (2004) argues, the globalization of qualitative research often entrenches the dominance of Anglo-American epistemologies, pressuring scholars from peripheral regions to conform to these paradigms. Similarly, Atkinson (2005) emphasizes that despite the nominal pluralism within qualitative methods, Anglo-American models continue to define methodological standards globally. In contrast, Iberoamerican scholars, encompassing both Latin American and Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) traditions, have fostered alternative epistemologies that resist such dominance. Bolívar and Domingo (2006) detail how in Iberoamerica, qualitative research has transitioned from amplifying marginalized voices to constructing epistemological frameworks that honor plural and multiethnic histories, challenging monolithic knowledge production. In Italy, Bruni and Gobo (2005) illustrate the late but significant institutionalization of qualitative research within a sociological domain historically governed by positivism and idealism. Concurrently, Cisneros Puebla (2000) highlights the Mexican context, where qualitative research shifted from abstract theories of poverty to capturing the poor's own narratives, deeply rooted in collective memory and cultural identity. These diverse traditions exemplify ongoing efforts to pluralize qualitative inquiry and decentralize the Anglo-American epistemic hegemony.

This historical divergence finds unique resonance in Türkiye's educational research landscape, where the epistemological influences of both Anglo-American and Continental traditions have left a hybrid imprint on academic inquiry. In contrast, the Continental European tradition conceptualizes education as both a scientific and normative discipline, with intrinsic theoretical frameworks grounded in pedagogy and didactics. This tradition fosters a research ethos that privileges context-sensitive, theory-building qualitative inquiry aimed at understanding educational phenomena in their social, moral, and cultural complexity. Importantly, Yıldırım (2023) notes that the Turkish educational research landscape, while institutionally shaped by the Anglo-American model, exhibits a hybrid character. The gradual incorporation of

qualitative methodologies in Türkiye mirrors this hybridity—situated between the application-driven, positivist legacy and an emergent, albeit limited, adoption of theoretically grounded, interpretivist paradigms.

Thus, the growing prominence of qualitative research in Türkiye's graduate education can be interpreted as both a methodological maturation and an epistemic reorientation. It represents a critical juncture where researchers are increasingly seeking to produce localized theories that respond to Türkiye's unique socio-cultural educational challenges, rather than merely applying borrowed frameworks. The paradigmatic shift towards qualitative research has not only manifested in the proliferation of graduate theses but also in the evolving perceptions and competencies of graduate students themselves. For instance, Tavsancıl et al. (2010) found that between 2000 and 2008, more than 80% of master's theses in Turkish educational sciences employed quantitative methodologies, with a heavy reliance on descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA. This quantitative dominance underscores the significant epistemological shift observed in subsequent decades, wherein qualitative and mixed methods research have gained remarkable traction in graduate education in Türkiye. The shift was also observed in Ezer and Aksüt's study (2021). Their phenomenological study of social studies education graduate students reveal that students predominantly associate qualitative research with sensitivity to natural settings, in-depth exploration of social phenomena, and the capacity to reveal subjective perceptions and experiences. This suggests a growing recognition among emerging scholars that qualitative inquiry is indispensable for understanding complex educational realities beyond what quantitative metrics can capture. Such perceptions reinforce the critical need to embed qualitative methodologies more robustly within graduate education curricula.

As Yıldırım (2023) aptly argues, this transition opens possibilities for constructing "micro theories" attuned to local realities, resonating with the Continental emphasis on theory elaboration through empirical research. However, the full potential of this shift remains contingent upon institutional commitments to deepen theoretical training, diversify methodological repertoires, and cultivate an academic culture that values epistemological reflexivity over mere methodological compliance. Although the dominance of positivist traditions persisted well into the early 2000s (Karadağ 2009), the increasing prominence of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms has enabled educational researchers to explore lived experiences, social contexts, institutional practices, and policy formations through more nuanced and contextualized lenses (Saban et. al., 2017; Rüzgar and Sözcü 2023). Despite early institutional resistance and infrastructural gaps, qualitative methodologies have become a key part of graduate education in educational sciences.

Globally, this transformation has emerged in response to the growing recognition of education as a complex, dynamic, and morally infused social process (Ponce, Gómez-Galán and Pagán-Maldonado, 2022). Following decades of marginalization and political scrutiny—most notably the exclusion of qualitative research from U.S. federal funding after the 2002 National Research Council (NRC) report—qualitative research has reasserted itself as a scientifically legitimate methodology capable of illuminating cultural, ethical, and systemic dimensions of education (Denzin 2009; Erickson 1985). Scholars have argued that the flexibility and context-sensitivity of qualitative methods offer unique insight into issues of equity, voice, and institutional critique, especially in educational contexts shaped by power asymmetries and policy pressures.

Within higher education specifically, Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023) highlight that qualitative research occupies a central role in advancing critical knowledge production and reflexive practice. The ability of qualitative inquiry to address diverse forms of learning, identity construction, and policy negotiation makes it an indispensable methodological approach in graduate research. Bogdan and Biklen (1998), pioneers of educational qualitative research, emphasize that qualitative inquiry is not only a methodological choice but also a theoretical and ethical commitment to studying education as it is lived and experienced by individuals within natural settings.

This alignment between ethical engagement and methodological integrity is further echoed by Hatch (2022), who asserts that qualitative research in education must always be deeply rooted in the researcher's interpretive stance and guided by a reflexive awareness of context, power, and representation. Likewise, Lunnay et al. (2023) underscore the transformative potential of qualitative inquiry in not only examining but also unsettling dominant educational structures through attention to lived experiences and plural epistemologies. They argue that qualitative methods—when grounded in critical theory, social justice, and participatory principles—enable researchers to challenge the often invisible assumptions embedded in formal educational policy and practice.

However, this expansion has not been without challenges. Karadağ's (2009) analysis of doctoral theses in educational sciences revealed methodological weaknesses in research design, coherence, and analytic rigor, suggesting that growth in the number of qualitative theses has not always been matched by growth in their methodological quality. Similarly, Rüzgar and Sözcü (2023), in their study of phenomenological research, found that many studies labeled as phenomenological lacked the necessary epistemological and methodological features, such as prolonged engagement and experience-centered design. Ponce et al. (2022) further caution against the uncritical adoption of qualitative designs without sufficient paradigmatic grounding, warning of what they term "paradigmatic dispersion. They provide a compelling critique of the ideological tensions surrounding qualitative research in educational policy-making spaces. Drawing from examples in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, they illustrate how qualitative research has been alternately marginalized and re-legitimized in response to shifting political currents. Their work situates qualitative research not merely as a set of techniques but as a contested epistemological territory that demands defense, articulation, and strategic adaptation.

In sum, the evolving landscape of qualitative research in educational sciences reflects both global epistemological shifts and localized responses to the limitations of positivist traditions. Türkiye's trajectory, situated between the Anglo-American and Continental European paradigms, exemplifies a broader struggle to reconcile methodological rigor with context-sensitive inquiry. The integration of qualitative methodologies into graduate education not only signals a diversification of research practices but also underscores an emerging commitment to theorizing from within unique socio-cultural and educational realities. Yet, as the literature suggests, sustaining this momentum requires deliberate efforts to enhance methodological literacy, foster critical reflexivity, and institutionalize support for epistemic diversity. Moving forward, the challenge lies in cultivating a research culture that not only embraces qualitative methods as a technical choice but also as a pathway for generating transformative, contextually grounded, and socially responsive knowledge in education.

Although qualitative research has gained power globally, in Türkiye, its adoption in educational sciences remains fragmented and underexplored. The historical dominance of positivist paradigms has limited the methodological diversity in graduate theses, raising concerns about the depth and authenticity of qualitative research practices. This study addresses the gap by systematically analyzing the emergence and characteristics of qualitative methodologies in graduate theses between 2000 and 2024. This problem is rooted in the broader philosophical and epistemological constraints that shape methodological preferences in Turkish academia, which are elaborated in the following theoretical framework.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Qualitative research in educational sciences is grounded in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms that prioritize subjectivity, contextual understanding, and the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Merriam 2002; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). These paradigms reject the notion of a single, objective reality and instead argue that social phenomena must be studied in their natural settings, where meaning emerges through experience and interaction. As Hatch (2022) emphasizes, qualitative researchers engage in the world interpretively, always situated within particular historical, political, and institutional contexts. Their work seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, often with an emphasis on giving voice to those at the margins of traditional educational discourse.

Lunnay et al. (2023) argue that qualitative inquiry represents not only a methodological orientation but also an epistemological commitment grounded in interpretivist traditions. Their volume emphasizes how qualitative research facilitates the exploration of diverse educational experiences by foregrounding plural knowledges, intersectional identities, and the complexities of institutional contexts. From this perspective, qualitative inquiry is inherently relational, reflexive, and sensitive to the ways in which educational meanings are co-constructed within specific social, cultural, and historical settings. The primary aim is to deepen understanding of educational realities by engaging with participants' lived experiences, while maintaining a reflective stance on the researcher's own positionality and interpretive processes.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) also underline the interpretive nature of qualitative research, noting its emphasis on rich description, participant perspectives, and emergent design. Their foundational work stresses that the qualitative researcher becomes the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, engaging in sustained contact with research participants and immersing themselves in the field. This approach demands openness, flexibility, and attentiveness to nuance and contradiction. Similarly, Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023) argue that qualitative research in higher education contributes significantly to critical thinking, democratic participation, and epistemic inclusivity in the context of knowledge societies.

Building on these foundational perspectives about the interpretive and socially responsive nature of qualitative research, the present study identifies five major qualitative traditions that structure graduate research in Türkiye's educational sciences. Each of these traditions offers distinct yet complementary ways to investigate educational phenomena in depth. First, the Case Study approach (Yin, 2014) enables an in-depth, contextually rich analysis of bounded systems such as institutions, programs, or specific educational interventions. It is particularly valuable

in situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are fluid and dynamic. Second, Phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990) focuses on understanding the essence of lived experiences from the perspectives of those who undergo them. This tradition emphasizes the temporal, embodied, and emotional dimensions of learning and teaching, seeking to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences. Third, Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is employed for inductive theory development directly rooted in empirical data. By employing constant comparison and open coding techniques, this approach generates middle-range theories that emerge from observable patterns and processes within the data. Fourth, Ethnography (Geertz, 1973) provides a deep cultural understanding of educational practices and ideologies through prolonged immersion and the practice of thick description. Drawing from symbolic interactionism and cultural anthropology, ethnography illuminates the intricate cultural contexts within which education unfolds. Finally, Action Research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) is characterized by its participatory and practice-oriented nature. This tradition seeks to transform educational practices through collaborative inquiry, cyclical reflection, and critical praxis. As Ponce et al. (2022) assert, such models are essential for democratizing research and empowering educators within their own contexts.

Collectively, these qualitative traditions offer not merely a set of techniques but comprehensive epistemic frameworks that shape how educational knowledge is generated, validated, and applied. Moreover, as Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023) emphasize, qualitative methods should be situated within broader societal, pedagogical, and philosophical debates concerning the nature of knowledge and the question of who holds the authority to produce it. Such an integrative perspective ensures that qualitative inquiry remains both methodologically rigorous and socially responsive.

In Türkiye, where positivist traditions have historically defined scientific rigor, these qualitative paradigms offer a counter-hegemonic stance. They enable researchers to interrogate local educational phenomena through culturally resonant and ethically responsive methods (Karadağ 2009; Rüzgar and Sözcü 2023). Consequently, the theoretical and conceptual foundation of this study is designed not only to trace the usage of qualitative approaches but also to assess their transformative potential in the context of graduate research.

Building on this conceptual premise, analyzing graduate theses becomes essential for two main reasons. First, theses represent a critical site where emerging scholars engage with and negotiate methodological paradigms, reflecting broader shifts in academic thought and practice. By examining how qualitative approaches are employed, we gain insights into the extent to which these paradigms have permeated graduate education in Türkiye's educational sciences. Second, such an analysis provides empirical grounding to evaluate whether qualitative methodologies are used merely as procedural alternatives or if they serve as transformative tools that challenge dominant positivist traditions. Therefore, systematically mapping the characteristics of qualitative research in graduate theses offers a meaningful lens to understand both methodological trends and the epistemological evolution within the field.

Aim of study

Regarding the recent developments in the adoption of qualitative research methods in educational sciences in Türkiye, this study seeks to interrogate how qualitative research has

been adopted, developed, and justified in graduate-level theses in Türkiye between 2000 and 2024. It does so by exploring the following research questions:

- How is the emergence of qualitative research in the graduate theses in educational sciences?
- What are the growth trends in qualitative research evolved over the decades?
- What are the developments and challenges in qualitative research trends over the decades?

By situating this investigation within a broader framework of educational theory and research methodology, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on the localization, legitimization, and institutionalization of qualitative research in non-Western contexts, while emphasizing the pedagogical and epistemological responsibilities of graduate education in cultivating methodological integrity.

Methodology

This study employs a systematic, document-based content analysis of graduate theses in educational sciences retrieved from the YÖKTEZ national database (tez.yok.gov.tr). YÖKTEZ is an official repository maintained by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in Türkiye, providing open access to all approved master's and doctoral theses submitted to Turkish universities across disciplines. It serves as the most comprehensive and authoritative source for academic theses in the country, ensuring both data richness and institutional validity for the present study. The database not only archives completed theses but also provides standardized metadata, including research methods, keywords, and disciplinary classifications, which facilitates systematic academic review.

The dataset includes master's and doctoral theses completed between 2000 and 2024 that explicitly employed qualitative research designs within the field of educational sciences. The study adopts a three-phase periodization (2000–2005, 2006–2010, and 2021–2024) to capture potential shifts in design choices, methodological clarity, and topic selection over time. This periodization was informed by preliminary observations of the dataset, which indicated notable transformations in qualitative research practices corresponding with key policy reforms in higher education, the global rise of qualitative inquiry post-2010, and the methodological reorientations observed in the post-pandemic period.

Purposive sampling was used to identify theses that explicitly utilized qualitative research methodologies. The inclusion criteria were: (1) theses submitted between 2000 and 2024, (2) affiliation with faculties of education, and (3) explicit indication of a qualitative research design in the methodology section. Both master's and doctoral theses were included to ensure a comprehensive overview of graduate research practices. The rationale for purposive sampling lies in its alignment with the study's aim to critically examine methodological and epistemological trends in qualitative research practices over time. This approach enabled the selection of information-rich cases that illustrate the evolving landscape of qualitative inquiry in graduate-level educational research.

As Patton (2015) emphasizes, purposive sampling is particularly suited for qualitative inquiries where the goal is not statistical generalization but the in-depth exploration of specific characteristics or patterns within a defined population. In this context, selecting theses that explicitly adopt qualitative methodologies provides a focused lens through which evolving research designs, practices, and epistemologies in Turkish educational sciences can be examined. This approach is further supported by Palinkas et al. (2015), who argue that purposive sampling is valuable when the researcher seeks to gain insight from cases that are particularly knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest—in this case, qualitative research in educational sciences.

Data Analysis

The data analysis employed a qualitative descriptive approach by systematically grouping and categorizing open-access graduate theses based on explicit methodological indicators. The qualitative data were analyzed through a descriptive analysis approach, focusing on categorizing and summarizing the methodological characteristics of the theses without further abstraction or theorization. This process is consistent with the principles of qualitative description as articulated by Sandelowski (2000), where data are presented in an organized and accessible manner, close to the original content. Instead of conducting an in-depth interpretative analysis, the focus was on identifying and counting the explicitly stated research designs, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods as presented in the methodology sections of the theses. Frequency counts were generated to establish patterns and distributions across the selected time periods. These elements were then systematically categorized and tabulated, providing a structured summary of the prevalent methodological choices in qualitative research within educational sciences in Türkiye. The analysis remained at a descriptive level, avoiding further theorization or abstraction beyond what was directly reported by the thesis authors.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis was conducted manually without the use of qualitative data analysis software. This decision was based on the structured nature of the dataset and the categorical framework established prior to analysis, which enabled systematic classification without computational assistance.

Data were analysed in the following the steps:

- *Data Retrieval* Accessed and downloaded open-access graduate theses from YÖKTEZ database (2000-2024).
- *Initial Screening* Reviewed methodology sections to filter theses explicitly stating qualitative research designs.
- *Categorization* Classified theses based on research design (e.g., case study, phenomenology), data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, thematic focus and disciplinary subfields.
- *Counting and Tabulation* Counted frequency of categories per period and organized data into tables.

- *Descriptive Summary* Summarized trends across time periods without abstraction or theorization.

Coding was done using the following criteria:

Table 1.

Coding Criteria for the Classification of Graduate Theses

Criterion	Operational Definition
Research Design	Coded if the thesis explicitly states designs like case study, phenomenology, etc.
Data Collection Techniques	Coded based on reported methods (interview, observation, document analysis, etc.)
Data Analysis Techniques	Techniques such as thematic analysis, content analysis, coding were recorded if mentioned.
Thematic Focus	Topics of research were grouped into thematic areas (e.g., teacher education, curriculum).
Disciplinary Subfield	Classified according to the educational science domain (e.g., educational management).

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

To ensure trustworthiness in the analysis, the data were processed through systematic categorization and transparent coding criteria. Although no computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was used, each thesis was reviewed multiple times to minimize potential coding errors and enhance consistency. The coding framework was predefined based on established methodological categories (research designs, data collection and analysis techniques, thematic focus, disciplinary subfields), ensuring a structured and replicable process.

Regarding validity, the study maintained descriptive validity by staying close to the explicit methodological declarations within the theses, avoiding interpretation beyond what was reported by the authors. Interpretative validity was supported by cross-referencing coding decisions with the original content, ensuring that classifications genuinely reflected the data.

For ethical considerations, the study exclusively used open-access data retrieved from the YÖKTEZ database, which is publicly available for academic use. No personal or sensitive information was collected or disclosed. The research process adhered to academic integrity principles, including transparency in data handling and acknowledgement of all data sources.

Findings and Discussion

This section covers the presentation of the findings in line with the research questions.

Emergence of Qualitative Research in the Graduate Theses in Educational Sciences

Data analysis showed that qualitative research methods were used intensively after the 2000's while there were single studies, one study each year, earlier than the year 2000. From 1985 to 2000, during the 15 years, there were only 6 theses in educational sciences that used qualitative research methods. The most frequent methods were interview and observation, while gathering

data with questionnaires was also an important technique for qualitative data collection (Table 1).

Table 2.

Emergence of qualitative research in the theses of educational sciences (1985-2000).

Year	Degree	Method/Technique
Earlier to 1985	--	--
1985	M	Observation
1995	M	Interview + observation
1999	M	Interview + observation + questionnaire
1999	M	Interview
1999	DR	Interview + questionnaire
2000	DR	Interview + observation + documents + questionnaire

The data in the Table 1 reveal that the integration of qualitative research methods into graduate theses in educational sciences in Türkiye began tentatively and evolved slowly between the early 1980s and 2000. It should be noted that due to the limited number of available theses from this period, these observations do not intend to make broad generalizations but rather provide indicative trends based on the accessible data. First, prior to 1985, there is no available record of theses employing identifiable qualitative research methodologies. This absence may reflect either the dominance of positivist paradigms or limitations in archival completeness. Second, the earliest identifiable qualitative study from 1985 employed observation alone—a typical starting point for qualitative inquiry in education. By 1995, there is evidence of triangulated methods, such as combining interviews and observations, indicating an emergent awareness of the importance of methodological richness. The topics ranged from music education and curriculum implementation to intercultural identity formation and metaphorical perceptions of school. This thematic diversity suggests that early researchers were interested in both micro-level classroom practices and broader sociocultural dynamics—despite limited methodological training. Thirdly, by the late 1990s, particularly in 1999 and 2000, there is clear evidence of more complex qualitative research designs. For example, the 2000 doctoral dissertation on English language teaching utilized interviews, observations, document analysis, and questionnaires—signaling a more sophisticated and multi-method approach. Similarly, master's theses (M) dominate the early period, though by 1999 and 2000, doctoral research (DR) begins to appear more prominently.

This shift suggests that as qualitative methods gained partial legitimacy, they became more acceptable for high-stakes academic research. Finally, despite increasing use of interviews and document-based techniques, there is little evidence that early theses were grounded in specific qualitative traditions (e.g., phenomenology, ethnography). The findings from this analysis support the characterization of the 2000–2005 period as a phase of “emergence and ambiguity,” which was preceded by a foundational stage (1985–2000) defined by the experimental use of qualitative methods, sporadic integration of qualitative tools, and a general absence of theoretical alignment. Most theses from this earlier phase lacked a clearly articulated research design and predominantly employed descriptive case studies without explicit methodological justification. This trend mirrors global observations, where early adopters of qualitative

research in educational contexts often approached it pragmatically rather than from an epistemologically grounded standpoint (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Ponce et al., 2022). Comparable patterns were documented in Spain and Latin America, where the uptake of qualitative methods was uneven and hindered by limited training infrastructure (Ponce et al., 2022). Within the Turkish context, Karadağ's (2009) analysis of doctoral theses similarly pointed to weak design coherence and underdeveloped analytic strategies. Despite its limitations, this under-theorized early phase laid the foundation for the more structured and epistemologically robust qualitative research practices that emerged in subsequent decades.

Growth Trends in Adoption of Qualitative Research

From 85 theses in 2000–2005 to 4,230 in 2021–2024, the adoption of qualitative methods in graduate theses has expanded nearly fiftyfold. This dramatic increase reflects the growing legitimacy of qualitative inquiry within Turkish educational research, as well as the institutionalization of qualitative methods courses and tools like NVivo and MAXQDA in graduate programs. The inflection point appears between 2011 and 2016, during which the number of theses nearly tripled (from 1,038 to 3,055), suggesting a significant epistemological shift in training and supervision practices (Table 2).

As seen in table 2, especially the 2021-2024 period marks a significant epistemic shift, with 4,230 qualitative theses recorded. Case studies remained dominant (1,697 instances), but notable increases were observed in phenomenology (739), grounded theory (739), and action research (432). Ethnographic studies, while limited in number (16), showed improved conceptual coherence and cultural reflexivity. There was increased alignment between research design, problem statement, and analysis techniques, suggesting a maturing qualitative research culture.

Table 3

Increase in the Use of Qualitative Research as Type of Preferred Research Design (2000-2024)

Year	Degree	Method/Technique
Earlier to 1985	--	--
1985	M	Observation
1995	M	Interview + observation
1999	M	Interview + observation + questionnaire
1999	M	Interview
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Table 3

Increase in the Use of Qualitative Research as Type of Preferred Research Design (2000-2024)

Year	# of QR	Case study	Phenomenology	Grounded theory	Ethnography	Action research	TOTAL
2000-2005	85	27	0	0	1	3	31
2006-2010	384	97	16	6	1	40	160
2011-2015	1038	380	98	21	7	128	634
2016-2020	3055	1143	415	42	11	402	2013
2021-2024	4230	1697	739	37	16	432	2921
TOTAL	8792	3344	1268	106	36	1005	5759

Table 2 presents a chronological distribution of the main qualitative research designs used in educational sciences in Türkiye, based on 8,792 graduate theses produced over five consecutive periods. The data offer critical insights into the historical evolution, methodological preferences, and epistemic shifts in Turkish graduate-level qualitative inquiry.

Developments in Research Design Trends and Challenges

Across all five periods, case study remains the most widely used research design. From 27 instances in 2000–2005, it grew to 1,697 uses in 2021–2024 (Figure 1). Its popularity can be attributed to its flexibility, accessibility to novice researchers, and adaptability to various research topics in education. However, this trend may also signal a conservative tendency to rely on familiar and less theoretically demanding designs, as noted in earlier critiques by Karadağ (2009).

On the other hand, phenomenology shows a significant increase from virtually no use in 2000–2005 to 739 instances in 2021–2024. This reflects a growing interest in exploring lived experiences and subjective meanings, aligning with global shifts in qualitative research priorities (Van Manen, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Similarly, grounded theory rises from 0 to 37 across the period, though its use remains relatively limited—possibly due to the complexity of its coding procedures and theoretical demands.

Action research, initially underutilized (3 uses in 2000–2005), gained significant traction by 2021–2024 with 432 instances. This growth suggests an increasing embrace of practitioner-led, collaborative, and change-oriented inquiry in educational contexts. This aligns with calls in the literature (e.g., Kemmis and McTaggart 2000; Ponce et al. 2022) to democratize educational research and foster transformative practice in schools and classrooms.

A similar trend was shown in the use of ethnography. Despite the growth in other designs, ethnography remains rare throughout the entire timeline, with only 16 uses recorded in 2021–2024. Its underrepresentation may be due to the intensive fieldwork, time commitment, and cultural-linguistic competencies required. Nevertheless, where employed, ethnographic studies have tended to offer deeper cultural and institutional insights, consistent with Geertz’s (1973) concept of “thick description.”

This period saw the emergence of a more diversified landscape, with some theses employing grounded theory, action research, and historical analysis. Yet, most continued to fall under a “basic qualitative design” category. Although diversification marked progress, professionalization remained incomplete. Doğan et al. (2022) showed that in Turkish graduate theses from this era, methodological inconsistencies persisted, especially in triangulation and analytical depth. Internationally, similar critiques were raised. For example, Dzogovic and Bajrami (2023) emphasized that despite increasing use of qualitative methods in higher education research, their implementation often lacked critical reflexivity and systematic analytical rigor. Hatch (2022) also pointed to a global gap between the expansion of qualitative methods and their proper theoretical anchoring in educational research settings.

The quantitative and qualitative expansion of research designs—particularly the steady increase in phenomenology and action research—reflects a maturing qualitative research culture in Türkiye. However, the dominance of case study and limited use of ethnography and grounded theory suggest continued room for theoretical diversification and deeper training. This evolution echoes global concerns about the balance between methodological expansion and conceptual coherence in qualitative research (Lunnay et al., 2023; Hatch 2022).

This most recent period represents a turning point in Türkiye’s qualitative research culture, marked by both quantitative expansion and qualitative maturation. The dramatic increase in the number of theses (4,230) reflects broader institutional support and curricular investment in qualitative training, aligning with international trends. For instance, Solmaz (2021), in her analysis of English Language Teaching graduate theses, reported a notable increase in the use of NVivo and advanced qualitative coding techniques. The findings parallel global observations that qualitative research is increasingly viewed as methodologically rigorous and epistemologically valid (Dzogovic and Bajrami 2023; Lunnay et al., 2023).

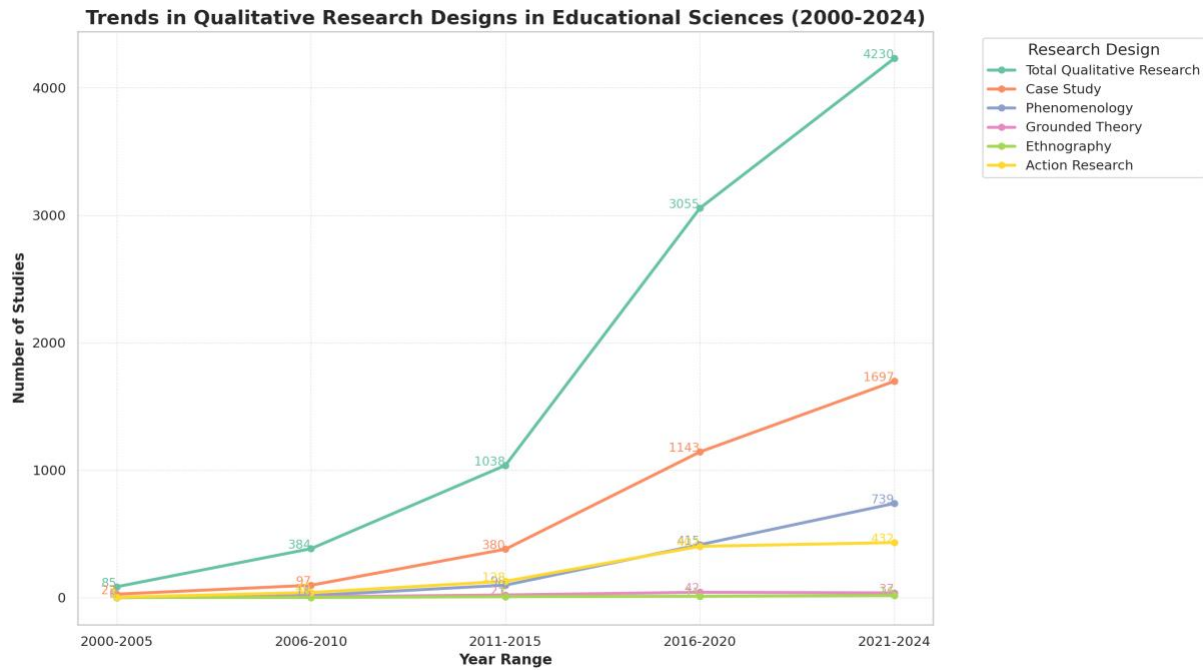
Moreover, the diversification of methods—particularly the rise in phenomenology, grounded theory, and action research—signals not only methodological maturity but an epistemic shift towards more participatory and experience-centered frameworks. Ethnographic studies, though fewer in number, began to reflect improved cultural reflexivity and conceptual coherence, echoing the arguments of Geertz (1973) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) that thick description and immersion are essential to educational ethnography.

This visual trend analysis confirms a broader narrative of qualitative research in Türkiye: one of rapid expansion accompanied by increasing diversification. The rise of phenomenology and action research is particularly noteworthy, pointing to a maturing methodological culture. However, the field still exhibits over-reliance on case study designs and underutilization of more complex interpretive frameworks. For sustainable growth, graduate programs must continue to invest in advanced methodological training, critical reflexivity, and design literacy.

In sum, the findings of presented here align with previous research which emphasized the increase in using qualitative research in theses. For instance, Ezer and Aksüt (2021) found that social studies education graduate students appreciate the method’s flexibility, depth, and its potential to provide rich, holistic insights. Yet, these students also reported significant challenges, including the complexities of data analysis, ensuring validity, and mitigating researcher bias—echoing concerns identified in this study’s analysis of thesis methodologies. This underscores a persistent gap between methodological adoption and the cultivation of requisite research competencies.

Figure 1.

Trends in Qualitative Research Designs in Educational Sciences (2000–2024)



Compared to earlier studies, such as Tavsancıl et al. (2010), which identified that only 8.57% of master's theses in educational sciences employed qualitative methods between 2000 and 2008, our findings reveal an exponential growth in the use of qualitative designs in the following decades. This trend reflects a broader epistemological opening within Turkish higher education research, marking a departure from the previous over-reliance on quantitative techniques.

While this study provides a comprehensive mapping of qualitative research trends in educational sciences between 2000 and 2024, it does not account for changes in the overall number of graduate students during this period. As a result, the observed increase in qualitative research might partially reflect the general growth in graduate education rather than an exclusive paradigmatic shift. However, the scope of this study was limited to describing patterns within available thesis data, and not the broader dynamics of graduate enrollments. Future research is recommended to explore the proportional relationship between the growth in qualitative research and graduate student numbers to offer a more calibrated interpretation of the paradigm's evolution.

Conclusion

This study provides an overview of qualitative research trends in educational sciences graduate theses in Türkiye, illustrating both the scale and depth of methodological evolution from 2000 to 2024. It situates this growth within larger epistemological, institutional, and pedagogical contexts, emphasizing the need for continued critical engagement, reflexive practice, and structural support. The future of qualitative inquiry in Turkish higher education depends not

only on expanding methodological repertoire but on cultivating an academic culture that values epistemic diversity, ethical integrity, and pedagogical justice.

The emergence and institutionalization of qualitative research in Turkish graduate education has followed a globally familiar pattern: initial descriptive pragmatism, followed by gradual epistemological awareness and design diversification. However, as many scholars argue (e.g., Karadağ, 2009; Doğan et al., 2022; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), applying positivist notions of validity without aligning with the interpretivist paradigm often leads to superficial methodological rigor. This tension is widely acknowledged in qualitative research literature (Schwandt, 2000; Kvale, 1995), where trustworthiness and reflexivity are preferred over traditional validity metrics.

In line with Ezer and Aksüt's (2021) findings, which highlighted graduate students' struggles with the operational aspects of qualitative research—such as data coding, thematic analysis, and ensuring methodological rigor—this study advocates for the institutionalization of more practice-oriented qualitative methods training within graduate programs. Specifically, appointing field-expert instructors and integrating qualitative data analysis software training can bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application. Such pedagogical enhancements are crucial for fostering a research culture that not only values qualitative inquiry but also equips scholars with the methodological dexterity to employ it effectively.

Findings also show a growing institutional support structure, including the widespread offering of graduate-level courses in qualitative methods and enhanced access to analytical tools like NVivo and MAXQDA. Increased institutional support through coursework, workshops, and software tools like MAXQDA and NVivo suggests that qualitative inquiry is becoming embedded within the fabric of Turkish educational research infrastructure. However, as Ponce et al. (2022) caution, continued attention must be paid to epistemological grounding to prevent superficial or instrumental use of qualitative approaches.

Consequently, the progression observed over the 44 years reflects not only a quantitative expansion in the number of qualitative theses but also a paradigmatic shift in the research culture of graduate education. Whereas earlier theses often employed qualitative methods in a supplementary or descriptive manner, more recent works demonstrate increased methodological sophistication and stronger theoretical grounding. Over the past four decades, the formal integration of qualitative methods courses and research workshops has played a crucial role in legitimizing interpretivist inquiry within academic institutions. The subsequent rise of phenomenology and grounded theory signifies a departure from basic descriptive designs toward more conceptually and epistemologically engaged research. Likewise, the growing prevalence of action research reflects a shift toward practice-based, participatory, and transformative inquiry. Despite this progress, persistent challenges remain—including uneven methodological rigor, limited utilization of narrative and arts-based approaches, and a continuing lack of ethical reflexivity in many graduate theses.

Recommendations

This study recommends the reinforcement of methodological training in both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Establishing dedicated research support units within universities and

promoting dual advisorships, particularly involving methodology experts, could enhance the methodological rigor of graduate research.

Based on the findings of this study, a contextual model for advancing qualitative research practices in Türkiye can be proposed. This model emphasizes three pillars: (1) integrating philosophy of science and epistemology into graduate curricula to strengthen researchers' theoretical grounding, (2) establishing national methodological networks and mentorship programs to enhance scholarly guidance, and (3) developing institutional policies that enhance the production and publication of methodologically rigorous qualitative research. This framework aims to foster not only the growth in quantity but also the deepening of the quality and critical potential of qualitative research within the Turkish educational sciences context.

To consolidate previous achievements and address persistent challenges, research institutions and affiliated programs should consider expanding and deepening training in qualitative methodologies. This includes offering advanced courses in narrative inquiry, ethnography, and emerging digital methods. Equally important is the professional development of thesis advisors, who must be equipped with up-to-date pedagogical tools to effectively mentor students conducting qualitative research. Establishing national networks and organizing conferences dedicated to qualitative inquiry would provide valuable platforms for sharing methodological innovations and critical reflections. Moreover, encouraging the publication of student theses in peer-reviewed, indexed journals can enhance both the visibility and academic legitimacy of their work. Universities may also support these efforts by providing open-access software, repositories of exemplary theses, coding manuals, and recordings of relevant seminars, thereby democratizing access to qualitative research resources.

While expanding methodological training and professional development in qualitative research is essential, as suggested, it is equally critical to reinforce the philosophical foundations that underpin qualitative inquiry. The strength of qualitative research lies not only in the diversity of its methods but also in the epistemological and ontological perspectives that guide these methods (Duberley, Johnson and Cassell, 2012). However, as noted in recent critiques, many researchers engage in qualitative methods without sufficient grounding in philosophy of science, which can lead to superficial applications detached from their transformative potential (Rudnick, 2014). Embedding robust philosophical education—covering paradigms such as interpretivism, critical theory, and constructivism—within research training programs is thus indispensable. This would not only enhance methodological rigor but also empower researchers to critically engage with the assumptions that shape knowledge production (Brinkmann, 2017). Without this depth, there is a risk that qualitative research remains a procedural alternative rather than a paradigmatic shift in understanding complex social realities. Consistent with Hsiung's (2012) recommendations, there is a pressing need to cultivate methodological pluralism by developing multiple qualitative toolboxes that are responsive to Türkiye's unique cultural and educational landscapes. Future capacity-building efforts should emphasize not only methodological training but also the epistemological empowerment of researchers to generate contextually relevant theories.

At the educational policy level, it is essential to institutionalize support mechanisms that promote the development of qualitative research methodologies in graduate education. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and relevant ministries could mandate the inclusion of advanced qualitative research methodology and philosophy of science courses in all graduate

programs in educational sciences. Furthermore, national research funding agencies might prioritize and allocate specific grants for qualitative research projects, thereby legitimizing and encouraging diverse methodological approaches. Policy frameworks can also be developed to support open-access repositories, methodological training workshops, and cross-university collaborations, all of which would contribute to enhancing the capacity and visibility of qualitative research within Türkiye's higher education system.

Ethical Considerations

As this study is based on publicly accessible theses from the YÖKTEZ database, there was no need for formal ethics committee approval. However, ethical integrity was maintained by ensuring that all data derived from the theses were reported in aggregate form without disclosing individual authors' identities.

Additionally, parts of this manuscript—particularly in the areas of language editing and structural refinement—were supported by artificial intelligence tools (specifically, language assistance from AI-based platforms). However, all data analysis, interpretation, and argumentation reflect the author's independent scholarly judgment and are not AI-generated.

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