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The effects of leadership and administrative qualities at high schools of fine arts and sports in Turkey

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the quality of leadership/administrative skills at high schools of fine arts and sports in the Republic of Turkey and to identify the importance of such skills on the quality of education. For this purpose, ten randomly selected principals from these schools were interviewed during the fall semester of 2010. The results showed that (a) the motivation of students and teachers, (b) support on more musical and art activities, and (c) creating a democratic environment for both students and teachers by the principals of these institutions were vital for the success.

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1. Introduction

The high schools of fine arts and sports were first founded in İstanbul in 1989 under the name of Anatolian high school of fine arts. During 2010-2011 academic year the name of these institutions were changed into “high schools of fine arts and sports,” and sports department was added to art and music departments. They offer four-year education for students who desire to expertise on arts or sports. Students take courses in their specialized areas (music, art or sports) with other subjects, such as mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, literature, history and geography. Today, a total of fifty-four of these schools exist in Turkey with music, art and sports departments. The goals of these schools are as follows (<http://www.muzikegitimcileri.net>):

- To help the students to learn the fundamentals in arts and sports and to develop their skills in these areas, in which they have interest, desire and talent.
- To prepare the students (in sports and arts) for higher education institutions.
- To develop the “team concept” of the students through teaching them to do team-work.
- To help the students to do research in their areas to develop their research skills.
- To help the students to develop their knowledge on their areas through following national and international activities in sports, arts and music.
- To help the students to become citizens who have the sportsmanship and who have understanding in arts and music.

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Although several studies have been conducted on the quality of education at these institutions, the effects of leadership/administrative level have not been a concern for researchers in Turkey. As every school, high schools of fine arts and sports also need well-trained principals who also have leadership skills and who are highly knowledgeable on arts and sports. As in every institution, one of the most effective ways to elevate the level of these schools is to have skilled administrators.

2. Methodology and procedures

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of leadership/administrative skills of high schools of fine arts and sports in the Republic of Turkey. During the study, the importance of such skills on the quality of education was also examined. For this purpose, principals from ten randomly selected from high schools of fine arts and sports in Turkey were interviewed during the fall semester of 2010. Data collection was conducted via e-mail contacts and phone calls with the participants and was completed in three weeks during November 2010.

The survey which was used for the study included two open-ended questions for the principals. These questions included following topics: (a) whether principals from music, arts or sports or other areas at high schools of fine arts and sports would be more effective than whom from other areas, and (b) suggestions to improve the level of success at these institutions. The obtained data was analyzed with content analysis method.

3. Results

The analyzed data revealed following results.

3.1. Results for question # 1

Question #1 was “Do you think the principal of a high school of fine arts and sports should be music, art or physical education teacher? Why, or why not?”

The results showed that one respondent opposed the idea of having the principal from music, art or physical education areas for these schools. He stated that if the principal was one of these areas s/he could favor the department of his/her area. Three participants indicated that it would be a positive effect to have the school principal from one of these areas because according to them if principals of high schools of fine arts and sports were from either music or art areas they would understand students better and they could have better solutions for problems. Other six respondents stated that it was not necessary to have principals from music or art areas, and they pointed out that: (a) a principal should be interested in arts, music and sports but does not necessarily from one of these areas because being a good administrator is more important than anything, (b) it was more important the principal to have a good performance as an administrator, and (c) it was important to have enough knowledge about music, arts and sports and to have a positive and supportive personality as an administrator.

As stated above, six of the ten respondents indicated that it was not critical to have a music, art or physical education teacher as the principal for high schools of fine arts and sports and one participant opposed such idea. As a result, majority of administrators believe that these prestigious schools might have principals from any area; however, principals at these institutions should be knowledgeable and interested in music, arts and sports so that they can understand different dynamics at their schools.

3.2. Results for question # 2

Question #2 was “What do you think the principals at high schools of fine arts and sports should do to elevate the level of success at these schools?”

As responses, the participants made the following suggestions:

- a. The principal should be active socially and culturally.
- b. Both teachers and administrators should be helpful, active and supportive for students in cultural and social activities.
- c. The principal should motivate teachers and students with positive and constructive approach and should provide discipline at school.
- d. Teachers and the principal should not reflect any problems on students. Nevertheless, they should have solutions through understanding each other.
- e. Both teachers and administrators should be able to understand the needs of these students.
- f. The principal should be an understanding, hardworking, open-minded person who should prepare the right studying conditions for students.
- g. The administrator should be a social and outgoing person who is knowledgeable and interested in music, arts and sports.
- h. The principal should be forward-looking and be supportive on teachers and students. S/he should target higher goals to achieve and act like an orchestra director who conducts his/her teachers and students in harmony and piece.
- i. The administrator should be democratic and creative.

4. Conclusion

According to the results, the following conclusions can be stated:

- a. Principals working at high schools of fine arts and sports do not have to be a music, art or physical education teacher. Nevertheless, they should be knowledgeable about these subjects.
- b. These institutions need creative, supportive and active principals.
- c. Since arts and sports require discipline, administrators should be a figure of discipline at their schools.
- d. Problems should be solved between teachers and administrators without carrying over to students.

The conclusions stated above indicate that regardless from music, art or sports area, principals should be educated and knowledgeable about these areas because of the concept of these institutions. Also, they should act as an orchestra conductor to provide balance, harmony and peace among students and teachers.

4.1. Future research

Researchers and music education specialists should conduct more studies that examine the effectiveness of leadership skills at high schools of fine arts and sports to help raising the success level of these institutions. It is believed that this study will be beneficial as a model for researchers in music education area in Turkey.

5. Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions, the following recommendations were prepared by the researcher:

- a. The principals at high schools of fine arts and sports may or may not be music, art or physical education teachers; however, it is essential that administrators at these prestigious schools should be educated or be interested in and knowledgeable about in these areas so that they can understand students better and support them regarding their development in being musicians, artists and sportsmen.

- b. As it should be at every school, the administrators at these institutions should be forward-looking, democratic, supportive and positive, but they also should be more creative and socially and culturally more active.
- c. A principal of a high school of fine arts and sports should provide an environment that students can improve their skills.
- d. The principal should also make a creative environment for teachers so that they can help students and themselves to develop their skills.
- e. The principal should allow students to prepare for higher education through their training at high school level.

As stated above, being the principal at high school of fine arts and design requires different skills because of the special qualities and needs of these institutions that make them different from other high schools. Being a competent administrator and being knowledgeable about arts and sports should be required for the administrators who would like to serve at these schools. Decision makers at the National Ministry of Education should consider these qualities when they hire and assign principals for these institutions. The only way high schools of fine arts and sports is to have accomplished administrators who have love and interest in educating these chosen students and directing the chosen teachers at these institutions in harmony. Frankly, they should be able to answer the special needs at these prestigious schools.

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