

## Evaluation Of Selection Criteria Of Schools Principal In Turkey: A Qualitative Study In Order To Define Appropriateness Of Selection Criteria Of School Principal From The Point Of View Of Participants

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the criteria utilized to select school principals from the point of view of participants who participated in principal selection process in Turkey. In this study, the criteria utilized in the selection process of school principal were evaluated by participants who appointed or not appointed at the end of the process as a school principals. A semi-structured interview form was used for data collection and the descriptive analysis was used for analysis of data. The interviews were conducted with 24 participants in the province of Istanbul and Canakkale. They were found that General and Specific Features were found appropriate and sufficient from most participants. Even though, there were slight disagreements among participants regarding appropriateness of criteria of personal features being evaluated, most of the participants thought they were sufficient. The most controversial criteria were award types owned by participants and the points assigned to the awards. Almost all of the participants do not agree upon both the type of the awards and the points assigned to the awards. Another topic of discussion is influence of the interview on result and its content. More than half of the participants emphasized that both impact of the interview on overall result and its content neither fair nor objective.

**Key words:** criteria evaluation, evaluation of criteria, principal selection criteria in Turkey.

### INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, as in many other countries, one of the important factors that influence the success of an educational institution is the qualifications of principals of the institution. In general, the success of an educational institution has positive correlation with the qualifications of the principals of educational institutions, and even the success of educational institutions cannot exceed the success of the administrator department is a fact that widely accepted. Nevertheless, selection of competent principals who deserve position is hotly debated for many years in Turkey. Every government that has ruled has different criteria for selecting principals who are capable of those positions. Main issue while selecting talented principals who deserve the position is which set of criteria is more suitable in order to make right decision. It is necessary that before evaluating qualifications of prospective principals, criteria that judgments are based on for evaluation must be determined.

Evaluation is to determine worth and merit of whatever evaluated (programs, products, quality, etc.) by comparing identified and clarified criteria (Scriven, 1991, p.139; Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen, 2004, p.5; Stufflebeam and Coryn, 2014, p.9). As seen from the definition, selection of criteria is main determinant for relevant evaluation. In other words, without identified and clarified criteria, it is not possible to conduct rewarding evaluations that serve its objectives. It could be concluded that defining appropriate criteria for evaluation are starting point for evaluation and have vital importance in evaluation process. It is a well-known fact that while defining criteria for evaluation, getting opinions of participants who are affected from evaluation process more humanistic and democratic. As Posavac (2011) stated that criteria for a specific evaluation are selected in close cooperation with stakeholder would yield more fruitful results. For this reason, evaluation criteria could be evaluated in terms of appropriateness and suitability by participants whose qualifications are subject to evaluation in order to succeed aim of evaluation. If criteria developed or selected neither appropriate nor suitable for the purpose of the evaluation, failure of the evaluation is inevitable.

Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published a regulation regarding Appointment of Managerial Staff (principal, vice-principal) on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014 in Official Journal and changed most of the criteria which were

in practice until that date. New principals were selected in November-2014 according to criteria published in Official Journal and this selection process called “November 2014”. Main problem for the study is that criteria utilized for selection process of school principals have not been evaluated yet from the point of view of participants. Therefore, aim of the study is to evaluate criteria utilized selection process of school principals for helping to select more competent principals deserved. Evaluation of criteria is a process for determining the validity of the criteria utilized in the evaluation and appropriateness for purpose.

### THE STUDY

In this study, general survey model was used since it aims to describe current situation, what participants thought about selection criteria, as it is. Because the survey aims to describe without affecting the effort of participants or result, validity and appropriateness of selection criteria have been tried to be determined from the perspective of the participants. Moreover, some of the criteria are compared with other countries’ criteria at the the end of the study.

A semi-structured interview form was used in order to collect research data. A Semi-structured interview was planned carefully before the interview was carried out. Researcher could change the order of questions, omit questions, or vary the wording of the questions depending on what happened in the interview. The researcher might also add other questions during the interview to probe unexpected issues that emerge (Lodico, Spaulding&Voegtle, 2010, p.124). Semi-structured interview form was created based on official documents that include rules and principles of selection process published by Ministry of National Education on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Summarizing all of the official documents regarding selection process of the principals, there are three groups of criteria as it is shown table1.

Table 1: Groups of criteria, main criteria, sub-criteria, point of each criteria/performance and decision rule.

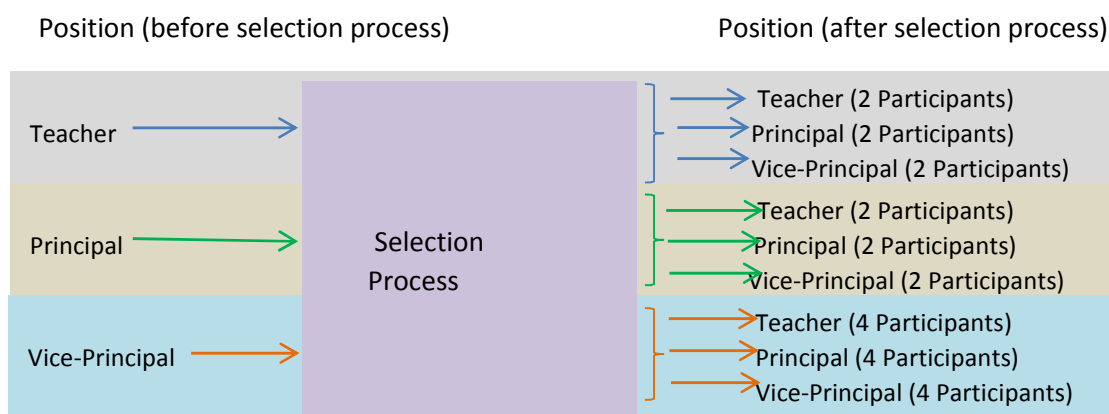
Group	Main Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Status of criteria
Group A-Pre-requisite Criteria	General Features	-Having higher education degree -At least to be a teacher -There should be branch -No judicial or administrative investigation in last 4 years	These criteria are <b>compulsory</b> to be able to apply. Without complying any of those criteria, it is not possible to apply for being principal.
	Specific Features	Having served as a; *principal at any time any duration or *vice-principal (head) 2 years or *founding principal, vice-principal and teacher with principal authority 3 years or *branch manager at a local educational authority or higher duties at any time any duration or *teacher 8 years	
Group B	Education and Training	*Associate & Bachelor (up to 4 years): 1 point/each year	If an applicant obtains/provides some of these qualifications s/he would get points assigned to the qualifications. More education and training, more experiences etc. mean more points. Group B criteria show performance of an applicant.
		*Graduate degree } 5 point in management field	
		*PhD Degree } 10 point in management field	
	Experiences	*Teacher :0,36 point/each year	
	Serving as a;	*Founding principal, vice-principal and teacher with principal authority :0,38 point/each year *vice-principal (head) :0,60 point/each year *Principal, branch manager at MoNE or/LEO* :0,72 point/each year LEO: Local Educational Authority	

	Awards	<p>*Certificate of success : 1 point each one (only one is acceptable)</p> <p>*Certificate of high success : 2 point each one (only one is acceptable)</p> <p>*Award with salary : 3 point each one (only one is acceptable)</p> <p>*Award for international success : 5 point each one (only one is acceptable)</p>	
	Punishments	<p>*Condemnation (Except those pardoned) : -1/each time</p> <p>*Stopping Salary (Except those pardoned) : -3/ each time</p> <p>*Stopping degree improvement (Except those pardoned) : -5/ each time</p>	
Group-C	Interview	<p>Subjects for interview; knowledge on general and educational laws (657, 1739 etc.), analytical thinking and analyzing ability, represents ability and level of merit, reasoning and comprehension level, communication skills, confidence and the ability to persuade, general culture.</p> <p>Interview committee consists of five members. Total point is calculated based on mean of each member's point.</p>	<p>This is final criteria and it is <b>compulsory</b> to get 70/100 points from interview for being candidate in order to be appointed as a principal. Under 70 point, it is not eligible.</p>
<p>Decision: An applicant must provide Group A Features and get minimum 70 point from interview. 50% of interview point and 50% of Group B total point provide applicant an application point. E.g if an applicant gets 80 point from interview (50% of 80 equals to 40) and total 40 point (50% of 40 equals to 20) from Group B, his/her total point would be 60 (40+20) for application. After getting application point, absolute evaluation is applied for appointment.</p>			

In the semi-structured interview form, all of the criteria and sub-criteria are included for determining their appropriateness and validity for the aim of the selection process. For content validity, six field experts' opinions were taken into consideration and form was revised based on feedback of experts. After piloting done, final version was ready to be used. There are 14 open-ended questions in the final version of semi-structured interview form.

The interviews were conducted with 24 participants in the province of Istanbul and Canakkale. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants. The goal of purposeful sampling is to select persons, places, or things that can provide the richest and most detailed information to help us answer our research questions (Lodico, Spaulding&Voegtler, 2010, p.134). In order to apply purposeful sampling, participants were selected according to (1) whether they go through selection process, (2) their status of before and end of the selection process. Figure 1 shows, participants' positions before and after selection process and number of participants from each position. For vice-principal position, there were 4 participants at each category since this category consists of both vice-principal and chief vice-principal (müdür başyardımcısı) level.

**Figure 1:** Positions of participants before and after selection process and number of participants from each position



Each interview takes 25-35 minutes. After getting permission of participants, interview was recorded by audio recording. First, demographic features of participants were recorded, then, interview was initiated.

For analyzing collected data;

1. All of the audio records were transcribed without any changes made.
2. Codes were assigned based on the themes created in semi-structured interview form.
3. In accordance with thematic framework created in the form, frequencies of each theme were defined.
4. Findings were supported by direct quotations and interpreted.

According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005) direct quotations made descriptive analysis more clear and dramatic. (p.224). P letter is assigned for each participant and numbers are given from 1 to 24.

## FINDINGS

After analyzing data, findings presented criterion by criterion evaluated by participants. First criterion is pre-requisite and about General Features. Content (sub-criteria) of first criteria are shown above Table 1. Table 2 summarizes appropriateness of first criteria from point of view participants.

Table 2: participants' opinions regarding appropriateness of first criterion, General Features.

Is the first criterion is appropriate as a prerequisite General Feature?	f	Is there any article to these Features that you want to add or remove?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	15	No	10
Inappropriate	7	Yes	11
No opinion/answer	2	No opinion/answer	3
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from table 2, more than half of the applicants (15 participants) agree that General Features required before application are appropriate and sufficient. But some of applicants think it could be different. Comment(s) were excerpted regarding first criterion as examples;

*For me, general Features are appropriate and sufficient. There is no need for more details. There was no need for any article(s) to be added or removed (P8). Good enough (P15). General Features are short and enough as it should be. There should not be tight restriction (P19). There should be 4 years BA degree instead of higher education degree since there are some principal in the educational system who hold 2 years*

As seen from Table 1, second criterion is prerequisite and about Specific Features. Participants' opinions regarding appropriateness of second criterion are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of second criterion, Specific Features

Is second criterion appropriate as a prerequisite Specific Feature?	f	Is there any article that you want to add or remove to these Specific Features?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	13	No	13
Inappropriate	8	Yes	8
No opinion/answer	3	No opinion/answer	3
Total	24	Total	24

Table 3 shows that a bit more than half of the applicants (13 Participants) agree that Specific Features are enough to select competent principals who were worth and merit to execute their duties. Some comments regarding Specific Features are as exemplified in the following excerpts.

*There should be some experience at vice-principal level. It is not true to be principal from teacher position (P3). ..... It would be good having an expertise in a field like graduate degree in administration either education or general (P13). ..... Principals should have leader potential and real leader. Should behave objective, clear, and explicit. Should not exclude anyone because of his/her political and religious choice (P20).*

Table 4 shown below summarized the opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of third criterion about Education. Details of education are in above Table 1.

Table 4: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of third criterion, Education.

Is third criterion appropriate for choosing worthy of principal?	f	Is there any article that you want to add or remove to this criterion?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	17	No	9
Inappropriate	5	Yes	13
No opinion/answer	2	No opinion/answer	2
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from above table 4, more than half of the applicants (17 participants) think that criteria regarding Education appropriate and sufficient. Comments are as exemplified in the following excerpts on third criterion;

*This criterion about Education and points assigned them are appropriate and right. (P16, P18). ...In-service training should be included (P23). To graduate and doctorate degrees at educational administration could be given more point. It could be encouragement for teacher to get these degree and there should be clear difference (P12, P14) ...there should be exception for candidates who have PhD degree in educational administration level. They could be able to be principal without any selection process (P2)...there should be difference between graduate degree with or without thesis (P24).*

Fourth criterion related to Experiences is summarized in below Table 5. It could be seen appropriateness of the criteria from the point of view of participants.

Table 5: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of fourth criterion, Experiences.

Is fourth criterion appropriate for choosing a good principal who has merit?	f	Is there any article that you want to add or remove to this criterion?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	9	No	14
Inappropriate	7	Yes	9
No opinion/answer	8	No opinion/answer	1
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from above table 5, less than half of the applicants (9 participants) agree that Experiences and points given to them appropriate and sufficient. However, most of the applicants who don't agree concerning appropriateness think only points aren't suitable to type of experiences. The following excerpts are examples on fourth criterion concerning Experiences.

*Types of experiences (as a teacher, vice-principal, principal) and points are assigned to these experiences normal and reasonable (P21) ...teachers' point could be increased... (P8, P9) ....more points could be given to duration of administration positions (principal, vice-principal) (P4, P5, P11) ...different points for different region(s) more appropriate (P12).*

For selection of principals, fifth criterion is related to Awards given to educational staffs for of high performance. The extent to which Awards and points assigned to them appropriate are shown in below Table 6 from viewpoint of participants.

Table 6: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of fifth criterion, Awards.

Is fifth criterion appropriate for choosing a talented principal who has merit?	f	Is there any article that you want to add or remove to this criterion?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	13	No	1
Inappropriate	8	Yes	20
No opinion/answer	3	No opinion/answer	3
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from above table 6, more than half of the applicants (13 participants) presented their opinions that criteria concerning to Awards appropriate and sufficient. Participants expressed their opinions as follows;

*Points given to each category of awards are suitable but reasons why those awards given to those person is unclear (15 participants), ....there is no fair standard when awards are given to person (10 participants), ...it is better to omit award section from criteria (P2, P3, P8), .....before giving award to someone, everyone's opinions at school should be considered in a school (P15), .....awards should be given based on objective criteria (P19).*

Sixth criteria are concerned to Punishments that are given to inappropriate behaviors of educational staff. Opinions of the participants regarding appropriateness of Punishments criteria and points assigned to them are summarized below Table 7.

Table 7: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of sixth criterion, Punishments.

Is sixth criterion appropriate for choosing a competent principal who has worth and merit?	f	Is there any article that you want to add or remove to this criterion	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	16	No	13
Inappropriate	4	Yes	3
No opinion/answer	4	No opinion/answer	8
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from Table 7, more than half of the applicants (16 participants) stated their opinions that Punishment criteria and points assigned them are appropriate but main concerns are how Punishments were given to those staff. Some of excerpts as an example as follow;

*Types and cutting points for punishment are normal but it is crucial how they were punished, reason. There should be clear evidence for punishment (P24), if a candidate has a punishment of stopping degree improvement, s/he cannot become a principal. This should be prerequisite (P2). ... For me, it should be omitted from selection criteria as most of the Punishments are given unfair way (P12).*

Last and most important criterion is Interview since an applicant get less than 70/100 point, s/he is unable to be evaluated. For this, interview is final criterion that has direct influence on the result.

Table 8: Opinions of participants regarding appropriateness of seventh criterion, Interview.

Do you think interview is appropriate for choosing a good principal who has worth and of merit?	f	What do you think about content of the Interview and 70/100 point barrage in the interview? Are they fair?	f
Appropriate and Sufficient	18	No	18
Inappropriate	4	Yes	3
No opinion/answer	2	No opinion/answer	3
Total	24	Total	24

As seen from Table 8, most of the applicants (18 participants) agree that Interview is reasonable and appropriate in order to select better principals. However, most of the participants, who agree that this criterion is normal, think there should be barrage (quota) in order to select better ones but content and barrage of the Interview are not relevant to purpose. Some of participants' opinions are as exemplified in the following excerpts.

*There should be a barrage (P3) in order to select better one. Otherwise, it is not possible to appoint every candidate as a principal (P19) ....barrage is normal (P8, P11), and ideal (P9).....barrage is just for formality (P10) ... I think 70/100 barrage from interview is well-planned strategy in order to prevent candidates who are member of different trade union from authorized one (P20).*

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Results of the study revealed that most of the criteria utilized for principals' selection process are appropriate and valid. However, some of the criteria are considered reasonable but hotly debated like 70/100 barrage in Interview, Awards and Punishments. It could be better to examine criterion by criterion.

Findings show us that participants in the selection process of school principal agree that; General and Specific Features are accepted appropriate as prerequisite criteria by participants. Nonetheless, most of the participants emphasized that there should be an item as a prerequisite under specific condition: before become principal, there should be, at least, vice-principal position but it is in common practice, e.g in Finland (Halasz & Pont, 2007, p.21;Alava, 2007, p.29) case, in the world to be principal from teacher position (Tipale, 2012, p.19; Lohmar & Eckhardt, 2013, P.213). Hence, this General and Specific Features can continue as a prerequisite criteria as it is.



Concerning third criteria, Education, in Turkey it is advantageous to have graduate degree or doctorate degree either educational administration department or teacher's subject matter. If you have one of these degrees it provides to you more points that means more chance to be appointed. However, having a graduate degree is essential in order to be school principals in some countries (Recepoglu&Kılınç, 2014, p.1829). In addition, many of the countries prefer (not prerequisite) candidates who hold graduate degree to be appointed as a principal or having a certificate in educational administration (not graduate degree) gives more chance to be appointed (Tipale, 2012, p.20). As a result based on research finding and world perspective, Education criterion could remain the same in Turkey. Graduate and doctorate degrees should provide more chance but should not be prerequisite criterion. Nevertheless, as Şimşek (2004, p.6) stated graduate programs in educational administration in Turkey are more theoretical and it is better to change content to case study, problem-based, clinical applications in schools approaches (Anderson, 1991, p.13).

Regarding Experiences, most of the participants satisfied criteria and points assigned them but some of the participants from different positions (teacher, vice-principal, principal) have distinct recommendation for points assigned to positions Hence, it seems enough and it is better to remain the same.

Most discussed criteria are Awards and Punishments. Different from Punishments, Awards are more subjective and if a principal request from authorized offices it is more or less given to educational staff. This situation makes it queried. Based on finding, like other criteria, they are sufficient but it is hotly debated how they are given. It could be more objective if they are given based on more clear and objective measures. Otherwise, Awards section could be omitted from criteria list.

Interview is the most widely used and most influential selection technique among the others. Sometimes, it is used complementary tools with written exam in some countries (Taipale, 2012). If it is used correctly, it could help decision maker to select talented principals but if used incorrectly, it is neither valid nor reliable (Anderson, 1991, 41). In Turkey's case, interview is used with other criteria but still it is essential to be principal to get 70/100 and it makes it controversial. Most of the participants think that there should be interview but content of the interview should be changed towards more realistic approaches like case study, problem-based and simulation etc.

Additional criteria recommended by participants that foreign language knowledge could be able to considered. It could be given extra points not as a prerequisite.

To sum up; Criteria for selecting principals should be revised and redefined based on opinions of all stakeholders and broader research results in order to select more talented principals for positions. Before deciding on criteria exactly, opinions from below stakeholders should be considered;

- related person from Ministry of National Education
- person from all trade unions for teachers
- teachers and principals.

In addition, Interview could remain as a criterion in selection process but commission (board) should be consisting of not only person of MoNE but also other governmental organizations like universities and trade unions (multi-member committee). And, content of it must be revised. Moreover, Awards may remain if there are objective standards to which they were given.

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