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# Principals as Instructional Leaders: Observation of Turkish and Math Instruction in Lower Secondary Schools in Turkey

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine ways in which school principals conduct observations of the practice of teaching Turkish and math in lower secondary (middle school, ages 10–14) in Turkey. Using a multicase qualitative research method, this study focuses on 12 secondary school teachers and six principals as they engage in observational practices in six schools in Ankara, Turkey. The analysis of the interview data revealed the following: (a) increasing the results of the central exam applied in the transition to secondary education is the main factor that shapes the principals' vision for Turkish and math instruction; (b) school principals focus on classroom management strategies and basic pedagogical approaches during the feedback process; and (c) they used different observation tools for the validity and reliability of their evaluation process. The findings of this study show that principals should deepen their knowledge of various content areas because classroom management strategies and basic pedagogical practices are not enough to observe the classrooms. The content of some courses pose challenges for principals to improve their knowledge of various content areas because classroom management strategies and basic pedagogical practices are not enough to observe the classrooms. These results encourage peer cooperation so that branch teachers can learn from collaborating.

**Keywords:** instructional leadership, classroom observation, feedback, Turkish instruction, math instruction

## Introduction

For the past few decades, researchers and educational policymakers have focused on the role of principals in improving students' learning outcomes and impacting classroom instruction (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Many countries (e.g., Australia, Belgium, Chile, China, Denmark, Guinea, Japan, Mexico, Turkey, and the United States) have adopted new teacher evaluation reforms that force school principal to observe and provide useful feedback to teachers about their instruction (Bellibaş, 2015; Lochmiller, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2018). There is an emerging consensus among scholars and policymakers that principals have an essential position to influence teachers, given that the former are the primary supervisors of the latter (Oliva, Mathers, & Laine, 2009). In the process of evaluation, feedback provided by

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principals to teachers about their instruction can positively contribute to learning and student achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Although much research addresses the importance of instructional practices, few studies have focused on the principals' instructional leadership practices for improving instructional practices through observing classrooms and providing useful feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lavigne & Chamberlain, 2016; Reid, 2019). These studies demonstrated that the degree to which principals adopt new teacher evaluation responsibilities has important implications for improving teachers' classroom practices.

Principals remain the primary evaluator for teacher observation and evaluation in Turkey (Ministry of National Education, 2014) and many other countries (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2017). Teachers mainly expect their principals to have experience in their content area and pedagogical approaches during the evaluation progress (Yeşil & Kış, 2015). However, few school principals are trained to conduct evaluation on classroom practices (Tonbul & Baysülen, 2017). They observe teachers' classroom practices mostly one time per year (Koşar & Buran, 2019; Yeşil & Kış, 2015), without any equitable and appropriate observation tools (Uçar, 2012), and few teachers received objective and helpful feedback (Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, & Schween, 2017). This is a compelling weakness since classroom observation for teacher evaluation purposes can be a problematic case that is affected by issues such as lack of consensus in setting teaching goals, providing useful feedback, and skepticism about the validity and reliability of classroom observation. For this reason, it is essential to investigate the types of goals, feedback, and data principals consider, prioritize, and collect during the evaluating teacher practices. This study can contribute to understanding how principals and teachers interpret and enact the classroom evaluation process in lower secondary (middle school, ages 10–14) education in Turkey.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which school principals conduct observations of teaching practices in Turkish and math in lower secondary schools in Turkey. The research first seeks to determine what principals and teachers aim to accomplish in Turkish and math instruction. Second, I examine the criteria principals use during a classroom observation and the ways in which principals give feedback to teachers throughout the evaluation process. The final section examines the tools principals use to monitor and evaluate classroom instruction.

### **Instructional Leadership and Classroom Observation: Review of Literature**

This study focuses on principal instructional leadership behaviors. There is a significant increase in the number of studies that investigate how the principals' contribution to learning and school development takes place (Hallinger, 2011). Additionally, in meta-analysis research, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found that instructional leadership is more effective in learning than other leadership models.

The experimental and conceptual studies, which are exploring how principals contribute to teaching and learning practices, started in the 1960s (Bridges, 1967; Gross & Herriott, 1965). In this period, the discussions of instructional leadership focused more on the supervision of teachers and the development of the curriculum. According to findings, principals' leadership practices have a positive indirect effect on the classroom instruction and student achievement via teachers' instructional practices (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Louis et al., 2010; Özdemir, 2019; Robinson et al., 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). The principals can indirectly increase student achievement by defining school mission, managing curriculum and learning, supervising

instruction, observing classes, monitoring student achievement progress, allocating teaching time, and addressing instructional climate. Also, one of the most important characteristics expected from instructional leaders is that they have to be knowledgeable about various content areas and pedagogical approaches. This means that principals have a critical role in supporting effective instructional practices (Hallinger, 2003, 2005, 2011; Louis et al., 2010).

The concept of instructional leadership is defined as setting goals, managing the curriculum, and developing the learning climate to improve student outcomes (Hallinger et al., 1996). Educational research has shown that classroom observation with useful feedback is a core instructional leadership behavior for principals (Blase & Blase, 1999; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Principals may address teachers' lack of instructional practices such as the use of academic objectives to establish learning expectations (challenge, academic press), effective classroom management strategies (routines, order, and student behavior), and differentiated pacing of instruction based on both the content and the characteristics of students. Becoming skillful at conducting sufficient observation and providing useful feedback can pose problems for school principals. One of the reasons for this may depend on the goals of principals in evaluating classroom instruction. Most existing studies indicate that goal setting has an indirect effect on classroom instruction by coordinating the work of teachers (Özdemir, 2019; Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017). Instructional leadership theory suggests that setting goals for teaching and learning is a crucial practice for principals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Recent studies have shown that school principals' perspectives on teacher evaluation shape how they apply this process (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). For example, Seashore Louis and Robinson (2012) found that two of the three principals, who were described as weak instructional leaders, lacked clear teaching goals. Therefore, determining the school's goals for teaching is essential for course supervision (Visscher & Coe, 2003). By constructing and initiating a goal, school leaders create an exciting emotional connection in the school and reinforce the personal and social identity of the audience with the organization, thereby enhancing collective harmony. As a result, individuals may feel increased self-efficacy, be more willing to internalize organizational goals and values as personal goals, and rely more on their ability to achieve the school vision.

A second important problem in evaluating teacher practices is the principals' lack of knowledge about subject-specific content and pedagogical approaches. As an instructional leader, the principal is expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction as well as have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to know that appropriate content is being delivered to all students (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Researchers suggested that principals must understand content areas to ensure instructional changes while they are evaluating across different subjects (Lochmiller, 2016; Stein & Nelson, 2003). They work across "subject sub-cultures" to improve instructional practices (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). In a study conducted in Turkey, teachers expected evaluators would know the content that they teach (Yeşil & Kış, 2015). Principals with too much understanding of their content areas tended to enforce their perceptions of what effective instruction entails (Lochmiller, 2016). However, there is no consensus among scholars on whether principals need to have specific content knowledge. Some content poses challenges for principals. Recent research on instructional leadership has emphasized observation and feedback in a coordinative way (e.g., Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Horng & Loeb, 2010). This practice could reduce pressure on the principal as other members of the school leadership team can take responsibility for providing useful feedback during the classroom observation.

Classroom observation should be conducted validly and reliably to reveal the differences among teachers. One of the main criticisms in evaluating teacher practices is that the observed results are biased (Bell et al., 2012; Park, Chen, & Holtzman, 2014). In this process, the tools a principal uses in the monitoring and evaluation process become important. Therefore, more information is needed on what reliable measurement tools principals should use to be fair among teachers. Unreliable observation can misguide teachers in their professional development efforts. The difficulty in implementing such a proposal is the lack of consensus on the main components of quality teaching (Cohen, 2015).

In Turkey, new evaluation reforms through classroom observation launched in 2014. These required more components of assessment frameworks that were conducted entirely by principals instead of by inspectors (Ministry of National Education, 2014). This study focuses on Turkish and math instruction because the instructional time of these courses is higher than other courses. However, a problem occurs regarding exam results, which are necessary for the transition from lower secondary school to high-quality upper secondary school. In this sense, students' failure in fundamental skills after four years of lower secondary education constitutes a significant problem area in the context of accountability for school management. In Turkey, governors appoint principals for four years. As the government employed a new teacher evaluation system in 2014, principals have an opportunity to improve instruction through classroom observation. All these results and tendencies give the impression that principal behaviors that influence instruction will become a popular topic of discussion in the future.

### **Research Design**

A multicase qualitative research design was chosen for this study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of principals' and teachers' perspectives and experiences with the teacher evaluation process. A case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident (Yin, 2018). To raise the validity of the findings, perceptions of two different groups, including school principals and teachers, were used to answer the research questions (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

### **Participants and Site**

The participants of the study were school principals and teachers of Turkish and math from six lower secondary schools in Ankara, Turkey. I chose the schools by considering their central exam results applied to eighth-grade students to pass upper-secondary school. When compared to the last three years, the average scores of three out of the six selected schools decreased (referred to hereafter as DS schools), and the average scores of the other three schools increased (IS schools). These scores were composed of an average of students' Turkish and math scores. Additionally, this study focuses on schools in which a principal had been employed for at least one year. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the schools included in this research.

Table 1

*Characteristics of selected lower secondary schools in Ankara, Turkey*

School (Enrollment)	District	Turkish average score			Math average score			Principals' details
		2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	
IS School 1 (297)	Altındağ	57 (-3)	54 (-1)	76 (+7)	38 (0)	43 (+2)	53 (+2)	Male, aged 41, principal at this school for 4 years
IS School 2 (494)	Altındağ	61 (0)	62 (+7)	77 (+8)	41 (+2)	46 (+5)	62 (+11)	Male, aged 44, principal at this school for 4 years.
IS School 3 (1,600)	Çankaya	74 (-3)	72 (0)	86 (+1)	52 (-8)	56 (-5)	69 (-3)	Male, aged 48, principal at this school for 4 years.
DS School 1 (1,053)	Altındağ	56 (-4)	50 (-5)	53 (-16)	36 (-2)	38 (-3)	46 (-5)	Male, aged 54, principal at this school for 7 years
DS School 2 (502)	Altındağ	62 (+1)	55 (0)	67 (-2)	39 (0)	40 (-1)	48 (-3)	Male, aged 55, principal at this school for 3 years.
DS School 3 (520)	Çankaya	74 (-3)	66 (-6)	80 (-5)	53 (-7)	54 (-8)	61 (-10)	Male, aged 46, principal at this school for 6 years.

Note: The difference between the average scores of the schools and the average scores of the district is shown in parentheses.

This study had 18 participants, which included six principals, six Turkish teachers, and six math teachers. All principals were male, and most of the teachers were female. The age range of participants varied from 35 to 60. Principals had at least four years of experience in the same school. Two principals had a bachelor's degree. The number of enrolled students in these schools was between 297 and 1,600, in Grade 5 through Grade 8. I asked school principals to identify two teachers in the Turkish and math department who had been at the school throughout their tenure as principal. School principals recommended the teachers whom they had recently observed in their classrooms. I then made school visits and conducted each interview individually in March and April of 2018. The new classroom observation system was implemented in 2014.

### **Sources of Data and Data Collection Strategies**

I conducted two different semistructured interview forms to collect data from school principals and teachers. The existing literature on teacher evaluation was examined to prepare the questions (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lochmiller, 2016; Rigby et al., 2017). Following this, draft forms were scrutinized by three academicians studying instructional leadership to ensure unbiased technique. A pilot interview was then conducted with two school principals and four teachers to increase the validity of the forms. The sample questions in the final form for the principals were: (i) "What are your aims for Turkish and math courses?" (ii) "What is your conversation with the teachers before, during, and at the end of the classroom observation?" and (iii) "What data do you use to evaluate teaching practices, unlike classroom observation?" The sample questions for the teachers were: (i) "What is your school's aims for teaching and learning?" and "What is your school principal's contribution to actualize these aims?" (ii) "How does your school principal observe your teaching activities?" and (iii) "What feedback did you receive from your school principal regarding your teaching activities?" To gain informed consent from the participants, I gave an introductory letter describing the purpose of the research, procedures, and participants' rights. Participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were also informed that if they wished to withdraw from the study at any time, they could do so without penalty or loss of benefit to themselves. Extending the length of an interview helps to ensure trust (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Therefore, each interview was about 60 minutes. The interviews were coded to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees. Schools with a decrease in the average score on the central exam from the previous year were labeled as DS1, DS2, and DS3. Schools with an increase in the average score on the central exam from the previous year were labeled IS1, IS2, and IS3. In the interview coding, "P" denotes principals, "T" denotes Turkish teachers, and "M" denotes math teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

First, I recorded and transcribed the audio of each conversation. Second, I performed content analysis using the NVivo 8 software package. Then, I developed descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2016) using a hybrid approach. Initial codes were informed by literature related to theories of teacher evaluation, classroom observation and feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lochmiller, 2016; Rigby et al., 2017), mission and goals (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010), observation rubrics (Park et al., 2014), and leadership behaviors (Özdemir, 2019). A researcher and I separately wrote the codes on the interview data. We reviewed the trial codes to address coding discrepancies and mutual themes which were not created before. In the peer-review

process, we reconsidered codes four times when new opinions appeared before reaching final codes (Appendix A). We analyzed the data by organizing and grouping codes into broad themes. After the research data were analyzed, a school was randomly selected and the summary report of this school was presented to the participants. To ensure validity, another researcher was asked to analyze and code the data of a school. The researchers then made comparisons between the findings and found the results were harmonious.

## Results

The interview results conducted with principals and teachers are presented under three themes. Also, the answers to these questions highlight the contrast between DS and IS schools.

### **Theme 1: Principals and Teachers Aimed to Raise the Test Scores of the Central Exams**

About three-quarters of participants in this study emphasized that the results of the central exam were an important part of their school goals. These participants felt that these exams played a crucial role for eighth-grade students' selection to a quality upper-secondary school in Turkey. Principals and teachers seek ways to help students improve test results. For example, when a principal was asked to describe what his aims for Turkish and math instruction were, he said:

“There was a negative perception of this school because the average scores gained from the central exams were low. I’ve been here for three-and-a-half years. We have set our goals to transform this perception. We did trial exams and informed the students about question-solving techniques. We need to increase the average of the school.” (DS2P)

This question also was presented to Turkish and math teachers. Similar to the statements of principals, teachers emphasized that they focused on the results of the central exams in teaching and learning processes. For example, a Turkish teacher responded,

“In general, we are focusing on how many students from our school won quality upper-secondary schools. These schools are in the highest-ranked category. We make students solve many questions to prepare them for the exam.” (IS1T)

For most principals, setting goals for eighth-grade students was more crucial, as only these students would take an exam that year. There was no common goal in instruction between the principals and the teachers. Principals were more interested in the instruction of the students to prepare them for the central exam. For example, a math teacher teaching sixth-grade students believed that their school did not have any goals for instruction:

“We do not have a common goal for teaching and learning at our school. I think the personal goals of teachers are more important. I have goals not only in teaching math effectively but also in bringing personal talents, preparing for life, and leading them to a future in which they will be happy. My principal spends more time with teachers of eighth-grade students.” (IS1M)

Principals in DS schools see newly-enacted legislation for the central exam as a challenge to adopt simultaneously. Unstable educational policies also force school principals and teachers



to focus on common goals. Frequently changing educational policies associated with instructional practices may have a negative impact on principal leadership practices. In a DS school, a principal described the reason for lacking long-term goals were the changes in the educational system:

“Now, we are setting goals, but we cannot identify long-term because the systems are constantly changing. For example, the exam system has undergone constant changes in the last 15 years. The name of this exam has changed four times since 2000.” (DS3P)

## **Theme 2: Principals Supplied Feedback About Basic Pedagogical Approaches**

During the observation process, principals focused on classroom management strategies and basic pedagogical approaches, such as getting students’ attention, giving examples to the students, and providing each student a chance to speak. For example, when asked what educational activities he tried to observe during the classroom observation, a principal noted:

“I am observing the classroom, whether the teacher has communication with the students sitting in different parts of the class. If the teacher is always in dialogue with the same students, I give some advice to him/her with an appropriate statement.” (IS1P)

However, principals could not provide feedback on the knowledge of subject-specific methods. Also, teachers stated that principals’ classroom observation process was bureaucratic, and principals lacked knowledge about their content area. Teachers often took general pedagogical approaches as feedback from their principals. A Turkish teacher also supports her principal’s response:

“After observing the classroom, my principal appreciates my effort in teaching, and he provides me some feedback in the scope of my classroom management. I tried to give a chance to different students to talk.” (IS1T)

Some teachers expected that their principals would recognize the positive and negative aspects of their instructional practices and that they would gain advice from their principals. A math teacher who worked at school with a low achievement rate had drawn attention to what should be done by the principal to carry out a classroom observation effectively:

“I wish my principal came to my classroom to observe my instruction frequently. Then, I want him to give directions about what I am missing during the instruction and lead me to teach better. My principal can arrange lecturers for my professional development or direct me to the educational seminars.” (DS1M)

Differentiation in the content areas is a key issue. Principals’ content knowledge is critical in terms of their feedback from which teachers will stand to benefit. Nevertheless, even if the principal is in the same content area, his/her feedback includes only pedagogical strategies. Based on data from DS schools, the feedback was focused on pedagogy rather than knowledge of the content area. Teachers’ opinions showed that even though principals knew the content, they did not provide any feedback. Teachers saw themselves as experts in the content area, and they expected the principal to realize their specialty and praise their

teaching practices. One of the school principals shared his way of negotiating with a teacher who cannot satisfy the expectation in terms of teaching:

“First, I tell about the enhanced and positive sides of the teacher by using the sandwich method. I say that he/she is good within a specific scope and has many contributions to the school. I add that I am so glad I have her/him as a teacher in our school. Also, I share that we can do certain things in these areas. Otherwise, adults can be offended easily.” (IS2P)

In providing feedback for teachers, principals resort to the method that will not offend an adult. A principal emphasized that he provides feedback by first expressing the positive sides of the teachers. He said, “I express the points at which the teacher is good to prevent him/her from being offended” (IS1P). Likewise, a math teacher working at the same school stated that the principal provided his feedback positively after the supervision in the classroom. Interestingly, these quotes from IS schools do not explicitly say that the principals’ feedback focused on content areas in the same way as DS schools. As these findings highlight, principals in lower secondary schools have to work across unique content areas, and it is hard for them to know about each subjects’ subcultures to provide feedback about instructional practices.

### **Theme 3: Principals Used Different Observation Tools for Validity and Reliability.**

Interview questions also included the kind of tools employed to evaluate classroom instruction. According to the responses, exam results as achievement indicators were common. In this scope, a principal (DS1P) stated that he organized trial tests and determined the difference among the classes. Similarly, another principal stated that his view was based on the results of tests conducted after school (DS2P). A Turkish language teacher working in the same school agreed with the principal and said,

“Test results are evaluated in meetings. If there are big differences among classes or if there is a decrease compared to the previous test, they are all discussed. The reasons for differences or decreases are investigated.” (DS2T)

Another method in monitoring and evaluating teaching practices explores the general perceptions of students and parents. For example, a principal asserted that even if he did not conduct classroom visits, what happened during the classes was reflected by parents or students:

“The attitudes of the students show whether the teacher is good at teaching or not. I know that although I do not visit classes. That is, I hear about what happens at school in some way.” (DS3P)

Also, a Turkish teacher emphasized that the principal learned about the process of learning from the students:

“We were studying a text on environmental issues. We performed a drama about the causes of environmental pollution. The students told the school principal about the class. That day the school principal came to talk with me. He said it was very nice.” (DS3T)

Also, some principals had examined student projects and stated that he felt a conviction in using them. For example, a school principal reviewed the books that students used in their lessons:

“I get the notebooks and the workbooks, I sit behind the classroom. So, I take a notebook from a student sitting in first, middle, and back rows, then I examine them during the classroom observation.” (*IS3P*)

Another principal stated that the students were looking at the products they showed for competition at the local or national level, “I read the composition from the competition, and I understand what the teacher is/is not doing” (*IS4P*). Moreover, with regards to the communication between the student and the teacher, another school principal pointed out, “Even if I do not enter the school, everything is clear from the general stance of the class, the teacher’s approach to the students when they are in line for the ceremony” (*DS2P*). There was no specific observation rubric for principals to help provide validity and reliability in feedback.

### **Discussion of the Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

School principals, as instructional leaders, have an essential position in influencing teachers’ classroom practices. This leads to discussions for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. This study investigated school principals’ observations on classroom practices of Turkish and math teachers in lower secondary schools in Turkey. This multicase qualitative study was conducted with 12 teachers and six principals. I would like to underscore several important findings of this study. First, the results indicate that one of the primary goals of the schools is rising eighth-grade students’ exam results, and one of the primary roles of principals is to monitor and evaluate this process. This study echoes these findings by emphasizing that school principals can make a difference in instructional practices by focusing on academic goals (Özdemir, 2019; Sebastian et al., 2017). In Turkey, parents, teachers, and principals have high expectations for the achievement of students in the national exam (LGS). Due to the difficulties in meeting these expectations, they feel pressure (Büyükoztürk, 2016). Principals should not only focus on rising exam results, but also organize learning and teaching processes. One of the findings of this study also showed that there were no common goals for other students’ learning activities. In the instructional leadership theory, principals need to set up shared goals and gain buy-in from teachers, parents, and students. This lack of common goals among all teachers might cause a problem for developing a learning climate. One of the reasons for the lack of common goals comes from lack of principals’ pre-service and in-service training. Indeed, Tonbul and Baysülen (2017) stated that school principals were not trained well, and this situation caused problems in developing a learning climate. Principals’ lack of education on evaluation can misdirect teachers’ professional learning activities and reduce relational trust among school staff.

Another important finding of this study is that principals focus on basic pedagogical approaches during a classroom observation. They provide feedback about management strategies such as classroom routines, organization, and student behavior. However, principals could not share feedback about the knowledge of the teachers’ content area. It appears that the principals consider Turkish and math courses alike in terms of teaching methods and techniques and perceive the subject’s content as less critical. This finding was also reported by Bellibaş (2015) in that leadership content knowledge and teachers’ classroom privacy force the principals to involve themselves in instructional issues directly.

Principals in lower secondary schools have to work across unique content areas, and it is hard for them to stay abreast of each subjects' subcultures to provide feedback specific to each instructional practice (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995; Lochmiller, 2016). Although teachers expected evaluators to know what they teach (Yeşil & Kış, 2015), some content poses challenges for principals. Recent research on instructional leadership has emphasized practices such as observation and feedback in a coordinative way (e.g., Bryk et al., 2010; Horng & Loeb, 2010). This understanding would reduce pressure on the principal as the school leadership team could join in responsibility for providing useful feedback during the classroom observation. These results encourage peer cooperation so that branch teachers can learn from each other.

This study demonstrates that the principals predominantly evaluate teaching activities differently from classroom observation, such as through reviewing trial test scores and observing students' behaviors out of the classroom. This result is consistent with similar results from other studies (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Lochmiller, 2016). There is a record of research that focuses on the effects of the principals' and teachers' use of student achievement data on teaching at the primary level. The results of this study show that teachers contribute to review their teaching activities, plan weekly schedules, and provide feedback to students. Previous studies indicate that educational leadership has an essential role in effective schools, but the principals stress the importance of creating high expectations in teachers, conducting evaluation processes, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring students' progress (Hallinger, 2011). The current study indicates that school principals are under pressure to produce evidence for successful school indicators along with increased discussions of accountability in education. While principals may not know teachers' content areas, they can embed the goals in school and classroom routines and procedures using exam results (Robinson et al., 2008).

While this study presents new information about classroom observation in schools, it contains some limitations. First, the data of this research were collected from six schools. For this reason, it cannot fully reflect the principals' goals on classroom observation, the feedback they offer, and the observation tools they use. More research is required to examine how leadership practices may differ in different content areas. Secondly, this study only examined principals' observations of classroom instruction. Research on how teachers' groups in the same content area support each other, and what feedback they share is still necessary. I used procedures to ensure that personal biases and values do not influence the results. I developed semistructured forms that contain open-ended questions based on the results of previous studies. Also, I explained to the principals and teachers the importance of truthful and honest answers to provide the accuracy of the findings. When the answers were not correct, I asked the question differently.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

The results of this study can prompt several recommendations for practitioners. For instance, principals should not only create goals based on the central examination results of Turkish and math, but also set out the goals for student achievement in the course. Also, principals need to contribute to the formation of shared goals among teachers. In Turkey, principals focus on basic pedagogical approaches that do not differ from courses in Turkish and math classes and not on the feedback they give to teachers. Because of different course content and teaching methods, principals need to improve their methods by researching specific pedagogical approaches within subjects. While principals were evaluating the process, they

did not use standardized observation tools. To standardize the process, policymakers need to develop extensive rubrics and enable principals to use these rubrics during the post-observation meetings to provide meaningful feedback for teachers.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Form**

#### *Interview Questions for Principals*

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your vision for teaching and learning in your school? What are your goals for Turkish and math courses?
3. What are your responsibilities for teaching activities conducted in the classroom as school principal?
  - a) What did you do during this training?
  - b) Have you ever failed in the activities you planned? Why?
4. How should an effective Turkish or math lesson be for you? What evidence do you need to see if an effective course is being carried out in the classroom?
5. What do you do for Turkish and math teachers to exchange views towards improving teaching in the classroom (management of classroom behavior, what helps best for students to learn, curriculum development, school objectives, innovations in education and teaching materials, etc.)? Did this help? Could you give a specific example?
6. What is your level of knowledge about how to conduct the course audit? What sources have you obtained regarding this information? Did you audit the course in Turkish or mathematics? How often did you do it? Regarding your course audits:
  - a) What conditions do you consider during the course audit?
  - b) What educational activities do you try to observe?
  - c) How do you interact with students during the course audit?
  - d) What do you share with the teachers before the course supervision, during the course supervision, and at the end of the course supervision?
  - e) What are the main themes of your feedback on course supervision?
7. How does the feedback you make differ according to the teachers' branch? How do you explain the reasons for this differentiation?
8. Can you tell us about your interview with a teacher who does not meet your expectations?
9. Can you tell us about your interview with a teacher who meets your expectations?
10. What data do you use to monitor teaching activities, unlike classroom observation? How do you use this data?

#### *Interview Questions for Teachers*

1. Can you describe your teaching mission at this school? How does your view of the teaching profession differ from your colleagues in your school?
2. What is your school's vision for teaching and learning? What is your school principal's contribution to the creation of this vision? What are your goals for Turkish and math courses?

3. How does your school principal monitor your teaching activities?
  - a) Is your school principal concerned with your teaching field?
  - b) How does your school principal's branch influence you and your colleagues in supervising your teaching activities?
  
4. What does your school principal do for teachers working in your department to exchange views towards improving teaching with each other? Does that help? Could you give a specific example of this situation?
  
5. What feedback did you receive from your school principal regarding your teaching activities? What is more focused on these feedbacks?
  
6. How did the feedback from your school principal contribute to the development of your teaching practices?
  
7. How much does this return from your school principal relate to your branch?
  - a) Can you give a specific example of these feedbacks related to your branch?
  - b) What aspects of this feedback differ from other feedbacks?
  
8. Aside from your school principal, who do you get feedback from on teaching practices?
  - a) In what characteristics do these feedbacks differ from those provided by your school principal?
  - b) Is this conversion valuable to you?
  - c) Can you offer a specific example to support your view?

## Appendix 2

### Themes and codes for analyzing data

<i>Theme 1: School principals and teachers aimed to raise test scores of the central exams</i>	
Central exams results ( $n = 13$ )	Pressure ( $n = 4$ )
Raising test scores ( $n = 11$ )	Setting goals ( $n = 4$ )
Instructional goals ( $n = 5$ )	Purpose of teachers ( $n = 2$ )
Education policies ( $n = 5$ )	Prepare students for life ( $n = 1$ )
Short-term goals ( $n = 4$ )	
<i>Theme 2: Principals supplied feedback about basic pedagogical approaches</i>	
Feedback on pedagogical approaches ( $n = 16$ )	Bureaucratic ( $n = 5$ )
Feedback on classroom management ( $n = 12$ )	Help teachers ( $n = 3$ )
Feedback on content knowledge ( $n = 7$ )	Professional development ( $n = 3$ )
<i>Theme 3: Principals used different observation tools to validity and reliability</i>	
Use test results ( $n = 13$ )	Review students' papers ( $n = 4$ )
Observation checklists ( $n = 9$ )	Refer to students' perceptions ( $n = 3$ )
Use rubrics ( $n = 8$ )	Refer to parents' perceptions ( $n = 2$ )
Evaluate students' attitudes and behaviors ( $n = 6$ )	