2021

School Principals' Learnings From Covid-19 Pandemic

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out in late 2019 and which we are still facing today, has caused an extraordinary disruption of many systems globally, including educational ones, and affected the lives of many students and families. Various measures were abruptly taken in order to ensure that students, teachers, and school principals continued their educational processes safely and also to lessen the crisis situation and chaos. One of these measures was country-wide school closures, and along with Turkey, most countries chose to close schools and make a quick transition to remote learning. During those weeks, several policy responses aimed at making sure that students attended online classes regularly and that they felt well. In the meantime, diverse stakeholders of educational systems (students, teachers, educational leaders etc.) have learned some lessons from this situation. The purpose of this study is to emphasize the lessons that Turkish school principals learned during the school closure period in Turkey. Within the scope of maximum diversity sampling, a purposeful sampling method, a sampling frame was established, and 105 school principals working in primary, secondary, and high schools in different provinces participated in the study. In the study, in which a qualitative online survey method was used, a Google drive form with open-ended questions was employed. Based on the findings obtained in the study, main themes have been created. These are personal, organizational, and educational lessons learned.

Introduction

After COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), many countries moved to close down their schools and changed the way they were teaching students. This new way of teaching students was mostly remote teaching. It was a quick shift from a traditional delivery mode to online classes. Remote teaching is defined as a teacher communicating remotely with pupils and their teaching assistant in real time, often through videoconferencing (Lind & Stjernström, 2015). This challenge caused the world to recall that it is certainly inevitable that educational institutions and systems, like many other organizations, are affected by certain kinds of changes, situations, and innovations in today's constantly changing world, and therefore, some approaches to change should be systematically integrated in order to achieve a successful and sustainable change process. One way to achieve this is "organizational learning."

Organizational learning is the process of improving the learning skills and experiences of organizations. In other words, organizational learning occurs in institutions where individuals have learned to learn from each other's experiences, common wisdom, and values and can do this learning together. Alas and Vadi (2003) argue that organizational learning is a vital mechanism for organizations to adapt to social, political, and economic environmental conditions. In organizational learning, group learning is highly essential. In other words, learning by individual work in the industrial society education model has given way to learning through teamwork in the informatics society education model (Aytaç, 2000). According to Mahler (1997), such learning represents a change in the sense that an organization experiences a situation and then establishes a change in its routine to correct for that experience. When organizational learning is evaluated in general, both the psychological and organizational aspects of learning gain importance. That is, learning is important not only for its results but also as a process.

Organizational learning as a model for school reform suggests that people working within school organizations are part of a shared social construction of meaning common to all members of the school organization (Louis, 2006). Schools, in the context of organizational learning, can examine and exploit what they have already learned, as well as innovating, solving problems, and learning strategies and knowledge to meet new challenges. Individual learning becomes organizational when it creates, modifies, or replaces organizational routines. However, by engaging in organizational learning and fostering the conditions that support it, members of schools and school systems can better transform the demands of change into opportunities for improvement on their own terms. They can also enjoy rewards such as the satisfaction of improving student learning; building and sharing professional knowledge; gaining the certainty and confidence that come from careful inquiry; and participating in an organization that values human relationships, democratic practices, and members' self-fulfillment (Collinson et al., 2006).

Another advantage of organizational learning is that through it, organizations learn to overcome situations of chaos and uncertainty. Lindsay (1989) defines chaos as the tendency of dynamic, nonlinear systems toward irregular, sometimes unpredictable, yet deterministic behavior. In order to see the reflection of chaos theory in practice, one can analyze chaotic situations (Akbaba, 1999). Hesse (1991) lists the principles of chaos theory as follows:

- Chaotic systems are not linear. As a result, they may not be analyzed analytically. Cause and effect relationships are not sought in these.
- Chaotic systems are in complex forms. An analysis of each final unit shows more dimensions and irregularities. Thus, measurements cannot be converted to any limit.
- Chaotic systems are inherent in nature. For example, everyone can see the circle formed by a stone thrown into water and how it gradually expands, and the phenomenon is repeated each time it is actually observed.
- Complexsystems have a feedback mechanism. In this mechanism, the output also returns to the system as input.
- Chaotic systems are extremely sensitive to their initial states. Seemingly small differences at the beginning can have huge effects.

If chaos is not managed well, crises occur in the end. Crisis is defined as "a difficult situation to overcome," "sudden developments in the direction of deterioration and a dangerous period" (Doğan,

1982). The concept of crisis is used synonymously with concepts such as distress and depression in social sciences. In this respect, crisis is used to describe situations in which the current solutions are not sufficient for solving a problem that entails a significant disruption of normal relations in the face of sudden social, economic, or psychological happenings.

Elliott et al. (2005) identified five features that appear common to most crises, irrespective of the nature and purpose of the organizations in which they occur: they involve a wide range of stakeholders; there are time pressures requiring an urgent response; there is usually little if any warning to the organization; there is a high degree of ambiguity in which causes and effects are unclear; and they create a significant threat to an organization's strategic goals. Grant and Mack (2004) claim that organizations may face crises sooner or later. Therefore, leaders of organizations must react to the devastation, uncertainty, and radical changes caused by crises and do their best to manage them well. Can (1992) lists the stages of crisis management as follows:

- Receiving the signal of crisis
- Crisis preparedness and protection
- Taking the crisis under control
- Transitioning to a normal state
- Learning and evaluation

Similarly, Jimerson et al. (2005) recommend five steps in crisis preparedness and prevention.

- Pre-impact phase: this is the stage of preparing for a crisis and planning.
- Preparing for the crisis: This consists of crisis training, crisis exercises, and crisis planning.
- Impact phase: At this stage, urgent measures are taken to protect students and staff from harm and dangers.
- Response phase: This is the immediate post-crisis effect. Security measures are taken to minimize the effects of the crisis. Psychological and medical support is provided.
- Post-impact phase: This includes up to a week after the crisis. What is done is followed.
- Recovery/restructuring: After several months or a year, what has been done is evaluated.

In the educational context, it is most important to prevent crises in schools because, as Sandoval and Brock (2002) argue, schools are places where students and staff are concentrated, and places that are busy are more prone to chaos and crisis. There are different views as to how a crisis is managed in educational context. Can (1992) lists them as follows: informing administrators, teachers, and other employees in educational institutions on crisis management through in-service training; having a more flexible management approach in educational institutions in crisis situations; checking whether education administrators have established crisis preparedness and protection systems; taking psychological measures to correct the organizational atmosphere disturbed by the crisis period; making flexible plans to prepare for the crisis period; and sharing them with the personnel and auditing them from time to time.

According to Morgan (1997), leaders must be skilled in managing irregularities due to occurrences from unexpected and unforeseen events, as experienced during COVID-19. The roles of principals as leaders in getting out of crisis situations in schools (Döş & Cömert, 2012) are:

- Using opportunities and resources correctly
- Effective communication
- Sharing tasks
- Making the right decisions
- Having the ability to persuade effectively
- Taking an objective approach

Paton (1992) outlines a comprehensive process to develop an effective crisis management plan. For schools, this involves the following elements:

- School senior management should be committed to the process.
- Resistance to plan development should be addressed before beginning the planning process. The plan should be developed in a consultative, participative manner to ensure its realism and the commitment to act.
- The individuals and agencies who will be involved in implementation should be involved in plan development.
- The plan should be accompanied by a commitment of resources.
- The plan should focus on realistic events.
- A risk assessment should be undertaken to aid the planning process.
- The plan should address events involving multiple casualties/fatalities.
- The plan and the training program it stimulates should focus on those common key characteristics and common key problems of trauma events and tasks.
- Procedures should be adapted from applications used for "routine" emergencies.
- Organizational leaders should be aware of liability issues, response plans, their roles during and after the incident, and the support resources available.
- The plan should address and define the tasks and responsibilities of all positions and all organizations likely to become involved.
- The plan should identify positions of responsibility rather than people.
- The plan should be based on appropriate expectations of how people are likely to act/react.

All in all, every new situation is a kind of learning opportunity, and each of us has a different pace of learning. Quick learners and those who grasp the situation must take a leadership role in the types of chaos and crisis discussed above. One of the best things to do after a crisis is to draw lessons from it in order to learn how to survive during similar situations in future.

Method

Data Collection

This research is designed as a qualitative online survey investigating the lessons school principals learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was carried out at different schools from different districts of Turkey, and only school principals participated in the study. Due to the current pandemic, the data were collected in April 2020 via an online Google Drive form with open-ended questions. Data collection with open-ended questions is widely used in survey methods. It is used to understand the perspectives of people who will be difficult to interview because of different circumstances. During the pandemic, social distancing has been strictly implemented all over the world. This has led to a major challenge in data collection (Dodds & Hess, 2020) using traditional surveys, which require interaction with participants. Qualitative researchers had no other choice but to search for other means to collect data. Therefore, online surveys, which distribute the tools to respondents using online platforms, became indispensable and feasible (Moises, 2020; Sy et al., 2020). The respondents accessed the surveys through links (Barnes et al., 2021). To illustrate, the interviewees might be far away, and it may not seem possible for the researcher to reach the participants. As a result, the participants are asked to answer by sending an interview form. The answers given by school principals to the question of what they learned from the COVID-19 outbreak as a school principal were used in this article.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done by the method of inductive analysis. In the inductive approach, the themes or categories come out of the raw data itself using detailed readings (Thomas, 2006) instead of prior data collection or analysis (Patton, 1980) in order to build a theory by discovering patterns and interpreting the meanings (Bryman, 2012). The data were first coded, then categorized, and finally reported by supporting them with several quotations. In order to understand the general categories, we used open coding. Glaser (1978) defines open coding as staying open and experiencing the data and attaching codes. It takes place as follows: The researcher reads the excerpt many times. While reading, some concepts begin to appear the researcher's mind. Open coding is engaging in conceptualizing the hidden aspects of excerpts. In this way, excerpts become concepts and insights (Wolfswinkel et al., 2013). The same questions were asked of each school principal, and their responses were compared.

Profiles of the Participants

The study included 105 educational principals from different education levels. Of the participants, 73.3% were men, and 26.7% were women. Preschool principals comprised 4.7% of the participants, while 36.2% worked in primary schools, 21% in secondary schools, and 38.1% in high schools. Considering the seniority of the participants in administration, 48.6% of the participants stated that they had worked as a principal for 7–18 years, and 16.2% had worked for 19–30 years. Thus, the participants are experienced in educational administration. While 40% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 56.2% had a master's degree.

Findings

This study asked school principals, "What have you learned as a school principal from the COVID-19 outbreak?" The answers were grouped under three themes: personal, organizational, and educational lessons.

Personal Lessons

Some of the lessons school principals learned from the COVID-19 outbreak were personal. These include taking science as a guide, change in attitude and behavior, increased awareness about life, resilience, giving importance to and maintaining hygiene, learning about the disease, and determining the priorities.

Taking science as a guide. The following statements show that participants have adopted the approach of solving problems with scientific knowledge and acting in accordance with the discourses of scientists:

> *"I learned that in the light of science, we can overcome any problem with common sense."*

> *"We must heed the discourses of scientists and do what is necessary."*

Change in attitude and behavior. The statements of the school principals regarding the need to be cautious as a person, to be calm and faithful and trust in God, to obey the rules, to understand the importance of health and the existence of the family, to consider the existence of elderly people, and to give more importance to cooperation and solidarity are listed below:

> *"Anybody can have bad days."*

> *"One should always be cool."*

> *"I learned that solidarity and cooperation are very valuable, living and keeping one's family and relatives healthy is very valuable."*

> *"I learned that social distance is important, that we should not go out without a mask and that we should stay home if we do not have an urgency."*

> *"Patience."*

> *"Being cautious and social distance is very important."*

Increased awareness about life. School principals stated that they were aware that many things they thought of as problems were not real problems. Below are examples of these statements.

> *"We realized many things that we could not appreciate in the past."*

> *"I learned the value of the opportunities and chances we have."*

> *"The problems that we experience daily and that seemed too big to us were actually not that important."*

Resilience. School principals stated that they learned how to struggle with difficulties, that every difficulty has a way out, and that they found strength to carry on.

"We learned to struggle with difficulties."

"I learned that there will be a way out in every difficulty."

"To be more organized, to stay strong, to always keep hope."

"I realized once again that we can find countless ways and methods in the face of difficulties and obligations."

Giving importance to and maintaining hygiene. School principals stated that besides the hygiene and cleanliness in the school, personal and social hygiene was very important, and they understood that social distance was important.

"We have better understood the importance of being clean and paid more attention to everything."

"Once again I understood the importance of personal hygiene, the concept of social distance entered our lives."

"How important is personal hygiene and social hygiene."

"Cleanliness, precautions, non-contact are very important."

"How important is school cleaning and personal hygiene."

"That hygiene is important."

"How important school hygiene is for our health."

"Hygiene, social distance."

Learning about the disease. School principals learned about COVID-19. In this process, they stated that they learned about the pandemic itself, the virus that caused the disease, the course of the disease, the ways of transmission, the kind of measures that should be taken, and the consequences of taking no precautions.

"As a meticulous person, I have researched before. My daughter is a doctor. She also conveyed the seriousness of the disease to us. We transferred this information to our school and neighborhood."

"We need to be constantly prepared for pandemics, disinfection work to be done more carefully."

"It is a droplet-borne disease that does not currently have a vaccine and can result in death in elderly and chronic patients."

"That diseases spreading fast and what a pandemic is."

"I learned that this process is long-running."

"The epidemic spreads in the form of a drop, social distance is essential, the effect will increase as the age group rises, and patients who do not show symptoms at the moment may be among us."

Determining what your priorities are. School principals emphasized that they thought about their priorities after the COVID-19 pandemic, that health is very valuable, and that their priority should be health. In addition, they stated that it is not necessary to rush around and that it is possible to work from home even if it is difficult.

"The importance of health."

"Always the primary importance of people, knowledge and health."

"Health is more important than anything."

"Social distancing."

"Life was experienced without running around. Working from home was really difficult, but it was achieved."

"How valuable health is."

"Things go on as long as you are healthy."

"Health is the most valuable thing in human life."

"Health comes first."

Organizational Lessons

School principals stated that in the context of organizational learning, they developed crisis management skills, developed their management skills, switched to digital management, understood the importance of team spirit and knowing human resources, understood the need to be open to unexpected events, understood the importance of technology and digital competence, and understood the importance of communication.

Crisis management. School principals stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis situation and that this crisis situation taught them about crisis management. They tried to manage the process, and they needed to be prepared for the crisis and turned the crisis into an opportunity. They also found that social solidarity and culture were very prominent in crisis management and communication and crisis leadership were important in crisis situations. They stated that they should interact with the environment.

"I learned how important crisis management, distance education, and pre-education of students' parents are."

"We learned the seriousness of crisis management, the importance of sacrifices, that our environment and our school should be integrated in every sense and take part according to the new situation."

"Process management, crisis management."

"How important social solidarity and culture are in crises."

"That the crisis can be turned into an opportunity for school and education."

"Being prepared for the crisis."

"The importance of communication. The value of crisis leadership."

Improving management skills. School principals stated that they developed management skills such as crisis management, stress management, time management, planning, and effective communication in the COVID-19 pandemic. They also came to understand the need to have a flexible and proactive management approach in these situations and to feel the importance of a sense of responsibility in times of crisis. The statements of school principals about improving their management skills are as follows:

"Crisis management, time management, stress management."

"The importance of the sense of responsibility."

"That time is precious."

"I realized once again how important effective communication, planning, and discipline are."

"I learned that it is necessary to have a proactive and flexible management approach."

Digital management. After the COVID-19 outbreak, school principals used the concept of digital management. They stated that they carried out education and management activities virtually through digital tools and held parent meetings, measurement and evaluation and other meetings, and even ceremonies virtually, but some said the digital approach was not the same as being in person.

"We have seen that everything can be carried out in virtual environment, but it remained dull."

"That even online ceremonies can be held, the system can be maintained by holding online meetings with teachers, that measurement and evaluation cannot be carried out properly in online conditions."

"The system can also be managed remotely."

Team spirit. School principals participating in the study stated that they realized the importance of team spirit and teamwork in the COVID-19 pandemic:

"The importance and benefits of working as a team"

"Unity and solidarity"

"I learned that team spirit is more important than I thought."

"I learned that being with people is a treasure."

Being open to unexpected events. School principals participating in the study stated that the world is not a safe place, that unexpected events may occur in every stage of life, and that it is necessary to be prepared for such situations.

"You need to be ready for life's surprises. There can also be a pause in a routine life."

"It is necessary to be prepared for such situations, that these situations can happen again, that teaching is a very devoted profession."

"We are always prepared for new situations."

"To be prepared for anything."

"Danger, diseases are always with you. The world is not very safe."

"As a school, we should be prepared for all kinds of situations."

Knowing human resources. Principals learned that after the COVID-19 pandemic, they knew human resources better. Some became aware of fake news, some were devoted to the organization and were motivated quickly, and some were only interested in their personal rights and interests. The digital competence of personnel was very important in this process, and principals realized that those who resisted innovations at other times adapted when necessary.

"In every platform, whether face-to-face or in distance education, motivation factors only motivate the hardworking ones."

"I saw how many of my friends around me were fooled by fake news. That's why I wouldn't have examined the news on social media much. I learned how important digital competence is."

"I learned how committed employees are to the organization who work in crisis environments."

"I saw that some teachers who resist innovation in many subjects can adapt to the new process in case of necessity."

The importance of technology and digital competence. School principals who participated in the study stated that they better understood the importance of technology and its effective use and that teachers should have digital competencies. The views of school principals on this issue are as follows:

"We learned that technology is now in our lives like oxygen."

"Even teachers without digital skills can use the online system."

"As teachers, we do not have sufficient knowledge and technological infrastructure/background."

"I clearly understood the importance of using technology."

"I learned that in-service training is an indispensable requirement for teachers to use technology effectively."

"I learned that it is necessary to use technology and social media more effectively."

Communication. School principals learned that communication is everything in this process and that social media tools should be used effectively for communication.

"We learned about online communication."

"We started to use social media effectively."

"Communication is everything."

"I announced online communication channels."

Educational Lessons

School principals stated that they learned distance education processes in the education dimension, that they understood how important schools and their students are to them, that there should be a change in educational insights, and how necessary planning is in education.

Distance learning. After the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were closed and education was conducted remotely. School principals stated that they understood the importance of distance education in this process, that they were successful in online education with the support of teachers and parents, that they learned that face-to-face education could be supported by online education in the future, and that it was necessary to be prepared and patient in distance education.

"We learned how important distance education is, definitely, and that online education can be beneficial (although not as much as face-to-face education) with the follow-up of family and teachers."

"How important the distance learning process is."

"After this day, face-to-face education can be supported by distance education, and I learned the importance of distance education and the need to be prepared."

"We gained brand new experiences regarding the distance education process. In fact, we noticed that some students who did not show up at school during this process put more effort. Similarly, we have seen that some of our teachers have carried out more diligent and successful works."

"We can contribute to the education of our students not only at school but at any time and in many different ways."

"The importance of being prepared for distance education and being patient."

The importance of schools and students. School principals who participated in the study said that they deeply felt the importance of the school and students; that the school was empty without teachers, parents, and students; and that they remembered the aims of the school again:

> *"Understanding the importance of school and the importance of students."*

> *"That the school is dull without teachers and students."*

> *"School means nothing without students."*

> *"We thoroughly understood the value of the school, students, parents and staff."*

> *"We learned that the noise of students is the full meaning of life."*

> *"We have seen through experience that school is not important without students."*

> *"It made me remember the school's purpose again. Reminded the meaninglessness of everything without students."*

Change in educational insights. In this process, school principals learned that there was a problem in accessing education, some planned activities were interrupted, and some practical information was useful. They also learned that every place where there are students should now be a school, and that they should be ready and flexible, and that science should be accompanied by values education.

> *"It is a difficult process to deliver education everywhere for children, who are the cornerstones of the school, and that the planned activities and trainings are interrupted. I learned how important it is to reach the parents with the least harm and to find a solution, to experience the difficulties in the process and to create practical information for them."*

> *"Every place where there is a student has to be a school. It is necessary to be ready for this and to be able to be flexible. Values education must necessarily accompany science. Because until the vaccine is found, the best thing is to protect and think about each other."*

Planning in education. Participants learned that there should be alternative plans in education, and they learned the necessity of being more careful and programmed as managers—that they should not postpone work:

> *"I learned that the education system should have a plan B, that is, I learned the benefit of being more careful and programmed."*

> *"Do not leave today's work for tomorrow."*

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

What have school principals in Turkey learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, which shook the world? What lessons did they learn for themselves? After analyzing the data collected from school principals, we observed that school principals' lessons learned were personal, organizational, and educational. We conclude that the most emphasized learning was organizational and management-based, followed by personal and then educational lessons. The concept of ensuring and maintaining

hygiene emerged as a common point of all themes. In the COVID-19 pandemic, masks, distance, and hygiene are engraved in memories as the slogan of disease prevention all over the world.

Organizational learning involves both behavioral and cognitive change (Rait, 1995; Shrivastava, 1983). This was obviously true also for school principals. We found that school principals' primary personal lessons learned were the need to take science as a guide, change in attitude and behavior, and an increase in awareness about life. In addition, school principals stated that COVID-19 empowered them as individuals and helped them develop a sense of resilience. School principals also expressed that they learned they should pay attention to and maintain hygiene personally. School principals obtained detailed information about the COVID-19 virus, the disease, and the pandemic they encountered for the first time. School principals shared this information with others. Again, in this process, as after many traumatic events and disasters, school principals stated that they thought about their priorities and that their priority is health. They also had learned organizational lessons in the COVID-19 pandemic. School principals said that this crisis period actually taught them crisis management.

School principals mentioned that they also switched to digital management after the COVID-19 pandemic switched to distance emergency education and their schools were closed. School principals in Turkey have used this term for the first time. There are many graduate and undergraduate programs in Europe using digital management, and the content of these programs includes the use of technology. Digital technology is also used in the business world, and because of the use of digital technologies to solve problems, new business opportunities are being created related to digital technologies. What the principals in Turkey mean by digital technology is carrying out educational activities, communication, and administration processes using distant digital technology.

Participants claimed that their management skills developed in this period. They also stated that they have a more flexible and proactive management approach in addition to developing management skills, time management, stress management, and planning. It is an expected crisis management behavior to behave more flexibly and to be open to alternative perspectives during crisis periods, as each crisis is unique and usually requires flexibility in response. Effective school leadership in times of crisis, therefore, is more about the attributes that the leader can bring to bear on the situation than it is about theoretical models to guide leadership responses. Effective crisis management requires school leaders who are prepared to accept a level of risk and run largely on their intuition with respect to both the legitimacy of available information and the most appropriate course of action (Smith & Riley, 2012).

One of the issues that school principals have learned administratively during the COVID-19 crisis is how important the team spirit is. Team spirit is herein defined as the extent to which individuals feel a sense of group togetherness (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) and participate in the team dynamics. From this perspective, the notion of team spirit is often used interchangeably with that of team identity, the part of one's self-concept deriving from membership to a social group (Shapiro et al., 2002).

Being open to unexpected events is another topic managers learned in the COVID-19 outbreak. Anything can happen at any time in any area of life. School principals also need to be prepared for

these unexpected events. In fact, the essence of chaos theory is being ready for such unexpected events (Akbaba, 1999; Akbaba-Altun, 2001, 2016, 2018).

During the COVID-19 crisis, school principals stated, they got to know human resources better, and some of them observed differences in their behavior. School principals stated that they discovered the importance of technology and the importance of digital competence. In fact, school principals are expected to have technological competencies and to be leaders (Akbaba-Altun, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2008, Akbaba-Altun & Gürer, 2008).

School principals stated how important communication was during the COVID-19 period, especially communicating with social media tools, and they used social media tools for this purpose. Effective communication with the school community will limit confusion, rumors and misinformation and is the key attribute through which the leader can provide direction, certainty, and optimism during a crisis.

Another theme from the lessons the managers in this study learned is education. In this period, online training changed the principals' point of view on education. Different methods and approaches for teaching and measurement can be developed in the following periods.

Finally, the process of reflection and learning for the future generally requires school principals to ask and seek rigorous answers to the following types of questions in order to feel safer and stronger for future circumstances (Smith & Riley, 2010):

- What caused the crisis?
- Could it have been anticipated better than we did?
- When did we realize that we had a crisis? Could we have known earlier? How?
- What warning signs were evident? Which did we miss? Why?
- Could we have prevented the crisis from occurring? If so, how?
- How did we respond to the crisis?
- Could we have responded better? How?
- What contingency plans can we put in place to ensure we are as prepared as possible if a similar crisis occurs at some future time?

Leading the recovery of a school community after a crisis, therefore, involves a delicate balancing act that requires sensitivity to the needs of those impacted by the crisis; the need to return as quickly as possible to standard operating routines in the eyes of staff, students, parents, and the community; and the need to assimilate the operational impact of the crisis. This period of recovery, however, can create major opportunities for a school by giving it a chance to refocus, re-energize, and try new ideas (Goswick, 2016).

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