

## **School Leaders' Preferences for Paintings in their Schools and Justifications for their Preferences**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to reveal the reasons underlying school principals' preferences for paintings to be exhibited on their school's walls. Also, it was examined whether there is a difference between the frequency of school leaders' participation in artistic activities as well as their preferred art genres represented by different paintings. The participants in the study consisted of school principals working in high schools located in the central district of Sivas in the middle of Turkey. The research was conducted using a mixed method methodology. Data were collected by using semi-structured interviews, surveys and questionnaires. A qualitative analysis method was used to find out reasons for school principals' preferred paintings. In addition, a quantitative analysis was performed to ascertain the differences, if any, among participants as regard to their frequency of attending artistic activities and artistic movements they preferred. According to the findings, the school principals chose paintings illuminating ideas such as green consciousness, ways of thinking, ethical principles, time perception, national values, and artistic perspectives.

**Keywords:** School leaders, art, visual art

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## Introduction

Art, which ultimately enables a society to progress, is born by the interaction of philosophy and science. The existence of this interaction depends on training of artists and scientists who can think freely and originally. It can be possible to gain perspectives of various times in history by means of art, philosophy, science, thinking and creation. Art is an important part of self-expression, emotional therapy, intellectuality, cultural product, and a discipline inherently linked with being human (Wright, 2003). From the early years, people should be given the opportunity to experience all aspects of creative behavior, such as developing their senses, researching and discovering their environment, experimenting, asking “What happens if ....?”, and using different types of communication (Woolf & Belloli, 2005). The entirety of the methods applied in expressing a feeling, design, beauty or a similar phenomenon and the superior creativity advanced by these methods is called art. The concept of art has a variety of definitions in the literature. Art, in the most general sense, is an effective tool in the development of human qualities.

Art is crucial not only for those who are interested in this field but also for the family as the cradle of education initially in preschool institutions where the first step of instruction occurs. Infusing art education into education starting from preschool can bring beneficial results. Living without art can lead to significant deficiencies in the development of individuals and may cause major problems in the long term. Art education can be seen as a means of obtaining positive outcomes in both spiritual and mental development of individuals. This educational focus can take place within the framework of a school course but also outside school, namely through the development of art awareness resulting from acquaintance with artistic works in everyday life. Opportunities to develop awareness at school and at home are intertwined and complementary to each other in the overall flow of life. In education systems based on rote learning, difficulties are likely to arise in generating and creating ideas. One reason is the negligence of sense perceptions and education. “If thinking and perception, mind and senses are in exchange while the function of memory finds its place in this whole, it is not that difficult to learn to think free (İpşiroğlu, 1988)”. Learning to think freely is an issue that should take priority in training of the senses. The lack of this training can lead to growing up of a generation that is indifferent to happenings, society, and the environments in which they live.

Read (2018) in his reviews on the works of art produced by artists with improved sensory perception, states "It must be set as target to bring up better people and societies, not to create a good work of art". As Read argues in his theory, social unity will be achieved through the training of the aesthetic sensibility. Read also emphasizes that an

integrated personality can be built by means of not only visual and plastic art education but all forms of expression (poetry, literature, music). "Development in a human being takes place only through the expression of visible or audible symbols. Education from one perspective then is thus the improvement of these means of expression. This means the necessity of teaching the child and the adult how to move and how to create images, sounds, tools and objects of use. If a person can do all that, then that person is fully educated." (Kırıçoğlu, 1991).

Art education is one of the most important ways for the individual to gain sensitivity; that is a, distinct way of feeling and thinking that reaches out to others. It develops students by enabling them to improve their perception abilities, to question their environment and enhances creative thinking. Viewed from a social perspective, art education contributes to the development of the relationship between nature, matter and human. From the psychological perspective, it encompasses the strengthening of the individual's ability to create. Suppressing an individual's ability to create can lead to mental dislocation. For this reason, art education that fosters perception, imagination, problem solving skills, and interpretative ability needs to be fostered. The vicissitudes of life can be solved through a creative process. This is the case in science education, art education, and in life itself. For this reason, art education should be implemented across the years in our educational institutions (Çellek,2003).

Proper and regular implementation of art education can bring many benefits. First, art education is important due to what is achieved during work progress (being subject, experience, product, etc.) not the outputs of the works. Second, it nurtures and develops individuality. Third; it teaches an appreciation that there are a wide variety of solutions for any problem. Finally, it leads to the expansion and enrichment of experiences and insights (Özsoy, 2015). Since art is one of the most effective means of expression and has an ornamental style (aesthetic attitude), painting is one of the branches of art that was adopted even in ancient times. The art of painting, which emerged when people began to express themselves, and as art is a narrative expression made with all kinds of materials, colours and lines on a large surface, it provides various tools for individuals to express themselves. Elements of painting such as form, colour, texture, drawing, light, motion and space altogether become the cornerstones of composition in painting. The resulting composition provides a significant benefit in creating what the artist feels like narrating. Art history experts analyse the historical development of painting in relation to individuals, countries, periods and movements. Information about art movements can be briefly summarized as follows.

Realism emerged as a school aiming to show the truth exactly in the same plane as naturalism for the purpose of describing nature as perceived by the eye. It is often difficult to distinguish between naturalism and realism. As a result of the

industrialization, the 19th century naturalistic/realistic thoughts and understanding of the rapidly changing reality have changed completely. Therefore, the naturalistic/realistic style of art encompassed both the reality and social phenomena (Krausse, 2005).

Surrealism evolved from Dadaist thinking under guidance of the poet Andre Breton. Influenced by the Freudian psychoanalysis, surrealists saw the 'unconscious' mind as the subject of art. Surrealism is defined as “pure psychic automatism, in which man intends to express the true functionality of the mind, either orally, by writing or otherwise; dictating with the gap of thought without any control of the mind and beyond any aesthetic or moral anxiety” (Fineberg, 2014)

Abstract art is the name given to the feature that rejects depicting what is real and exposes or does not expose it to abstraction in the 20th century. Abstract landscape painting, which emerged at the end of the Second World War, is part of the French art tradition (Monet, Cezanne, Cubism). But it attaches importance to being in harmony with nature. Abstract art, which began in 1910 with a famous watercolour painting by artist Kandinsky, represents a breakaway of forms. Color is used only to express internal imperatives. In 1914, the artist Mondrian achieved abstraction, which he regarded as the compromise between ethics and aesthetics. Subsequently, the artist Malevich's suprematism (abstract geometricism) further paved the way for abstract art with the phenomenon of independence in painting becoming consolidated by then (Eroğlu, 2003).

With the different social characteristics of the age working in tandem with human creativity, the visual arts are nourished by different currents. In a way, painting makes visible what is happening in the world even the apparently imperceptible. At all levels of education, objects, ideas, beliefs and practices that form the integrity of visual culture and visual experience inside and outside schools shape our thinking and direct us to create new knowledge through visual means (Freedman, 2003). According to Tonguç, art has a role in all levels of school life since it informs us that children should be imbued with an appreciation of shape and colour during painting class, besides drawing attention of the students to their development from an early age enabling to perceive their progression in their ability to express themselves more ably (Kurtuluş, 2000). Sharp (2004) lists the skills that visual art brings to individuals as creativity, imagination, critical thinking, new ideas, interpreting skills, personality development and self-formation, strengthening the sense of curiosity, social skills, problem solving, creating a valuable product, communication skills, and visual skills. These skills coincide with the 21st century skills in education that are considered desirable to be fostered in students (OECD, 2018). It can be said that visual art education can impact on the acquisition of those skills.

It is obvious that all engineering and science branches in addition to artists draw on perception and sensory education. When interest, attention, empathy, comprehension, comparison and imagery are presented to education of society with the visual language of art, a perceptually select society grows that triggers the creativity of the artist (Kibarkaya, 2011). School is one of the institutions that fosters a sensitive society. Education plays an important role in teaching individuals sensitivity about the world and their environment they live in. In addition to art education in schools, participating in events such as artistic activities, expeditions to museums, theatres, painting, and music and so on can make art a part of life. Living hand in hand with art in addition to courses undertaken is to immerse oneself in art without limiting it to a class/classroom. As a result, the individual may be more susceptible to develop their senses, increase their sensitivity and to understand and accept diversity. A sensitive person is the person who has command of art's formative language or is interested in the types of art created by this language (Kaya, 2007). Parents, teachers and school leaders are expected to play roles in making art a part of life.

Apart from such activities, fields and tools of art can be used for designing school buildings and classrooms. The reason for analysing the paintings preferred by school principals is the fact that teacher autonomy is at a very low level and that decisions involving in-school artistic activities are transacted by school administration (Bümen, 2019; Gomendio, 2017; Wermke & Höstfält, 2014; UNESCO-GEM, 2017). For this reason, it seems that school principals' preferences of paintings for their schools are important as they are apt to influence students' artistic views. What makes this study unique is that it focuses more on school principals' views than discussing such matters from visual arts teachers' perspectives. Also, school administrators' initiatives to organize artistic activities and to create an artistic settings can suggest the fields in which they wish to educate their students, providing a clue to the artistic profiles of future generations.

Moreover, the variety of art movements favoured by school principals, the diversity of their schools, their openness to different perspectives, etc. can provide implicit information for the creation of schools that promote flexibility and a high degree of freedom. The frequency of school principals' involvement in artistic activities may play a part for their adopting different perspectives. Bearing this in mind, this study examined the frequency of school principals' participation in artistic activities. If an investigation is carried out into what kind of paintings school leaders would like to see in their schools, this can provide a lens into understanding school leaders' educational goals. In this regard, the present study is expected to contribute to art and education fields. Currently, the literature seems to lack of a specific study on this matter; therefore, we aim to fill the research gap. This study is limited to opinions regarding paintings preferred by school principals in providing artistic development outside the art curriculum.

The particular painting preferences of school principals implies in which directions they wish to train pupils. These hints are important as they reveal how far the national education system has progressed with the arts. At the same time, significance can be attributed to this research as it presents the concrete contributions of art education to the individual development and the gaining of sensitivity about a variety of issues in regular schools. This study aims at finding out school leaders' preferences for paintings they would like to see in their schools accompanied by their respective justifications. For this purpose, a catalogue was derived by the researcher which contains samples of all art movements for school administrators to choose from. In line with the study's purpose, answers were sought for the following questions.

What are the school leaders' first preference regarding the paintings they wish to have displayed in their schools?

What are the school leaders' second preference regarding the paintings they wish to have displayed in their schools?

Do school leaders differ in their frequency of attending artistic events?

Do school leaders differ in the art movements preferences as represented by paintings they prefer?

## **Method**

This study used a mixed methods approach. In general, the mixed method is preferable as it blends the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods while minimizing the limitations of each (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). By following the convergent parallel pattern approach, the data were collected in one instance but analyzed separately in this study (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative data were used to analyze the school principals' preference for paintings they would like to see in their schools. On the other hand, quantitative data were used to find out the frequency of school principals' participating in artistic activities and the art movements corresponding to their preferred paintings. The findings obtained from the former method were validated with those from the qualitative method. The mixed-method approach was preferred with expectation of reaching a comprehensive and integrative point of view which reveals the aim of the study and yields more reliable and comprehensive results.

## **Qualitative Research Model**

The qualitative method was used to scrutinize the school leaders' wishes for paintings in the school; therefore, the study was carried out using a phenomenological model. This model allows the researcher to explain how one or more participants experience a specific event, situation or concept (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). As a result, this study was designed as a phenomenological model since it is suitable for disclosing the reasons school administrators choose certain paintings for their school from their point of view.

### Quantitative Research Model

The quantitative component was included in this study to find out the frequency of school principals' attending artistic activities and their preferred types of paintings. Therefore, it is a descriptive survey at the same time. Descriptive surveys are conducted to clearly describe a specific situation or phenomenon or the magnitude and direction of relationships between variables (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). Considering our intention to determine whether school principals differ in the frequency of participating in artistic activities and their art preferences, our study can be labelled as a descriptive survey.

### Study Group

The participants of the study were the school principals of high schools located in the central part of Sivas province during the 2018-2019 academic year. By using maximum variation sampling amongst purposeful sampling methods, principals working in different types of high schools were selected as the study participants. A total of thirty-eight school principals participated in the qualitative part of the study. For quantitative method, the universe of the study consist of fifty-three high schools in the central district of Sivas. Instead of any sampling method we aimed to reach the study group. Principals of thirty-eight schools who volunteered to participate in the study did so to the extent they could be accessed and thus constituted the study group for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. Table 1 shows the final facts about the participants in the study.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Variable		f
Branch	Sociology	3
	Philosophy	3
	Religious culture and moral knowledge	4
	Physics	2
	Vocational education	6
	Chemistry	2
	Maths	2
	Physical education	6
	Geography	2
	Foreign language	2
	Literature	6
	Gender	Female
Male		30
School type	Anatolian high school	22
	Imam Hatip high school	5
	Vocational high school	9
	Fine arts high school	1
	Social sciences high school	1
Total		38

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Three different tools were used for collecting data in this study. In order to obtain information about the school principals' preferences for paintings to appear in their schools, the researchers prepared a catalogue of representations of various art movements. Interviews were held with the principals during the summer of 2017 and each of the interviews lasted around 35 minutes.

33 samples were included in the catalogue after it was ensured that the catalogue was usable in schools and contained distinct items according to the expert views of two specialists from the department of art. The items were picked carefully in a way to cover pioneer artists for each of the art movements in the light of the specialists' comments.

In addition, a semi-structured interview form was drawn up to record the paintings preferred by school principals along with their justifications. Third, a questionnaire was used for determining the frequency of artistic activities and demographic characteristics of participants. The questionnaire was revised by two experts from educational sciences and two from fine arts particularly for checking the comprehensibility and relevance of the questions. The data collection instruments were completed after obtaining expert opinion.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Analysis of the Qualitative Data**

The data recorded during the interviews were transcribed soon after the recording. Then the written data were analyzed through content analysis. The views of the participants were analyzed by coding according to certain instructions about quantification and digitization (Simon & Burstein, 1985). The coding was done through independent script analysis in order to boost study credibility. Resulting coding were then compared. Likewise, the compliance of categories and themes was sought by the researchers independently. The category-theme agreement was crosschecked by another independent expert, who was not involved in the study but experienced in qualitative study; necessary corrections were made for further refining. When the themes, codes, and categories were validated, study findings were elicited and interpreted. To further strengthen the results, direct quotations in relation to each of the study objectives were made for participants renamed as K1, K2, K3.



### **Analysis of the Quantitative Data**

The data obtained from the quantitative analysis were analyzed with SPSS. In this particular part of the analysis, data analysis techniques were borrowed from the relational screening model. Since the number of participants in each group was not more than 30, it was investigated whether there was a difference between the groups. The data were analyzed with Chi-Square Test for One Sample. This test is a good fit that checks whether individuals or objects at levels of a categorical variable show a significant difference (Büyüköztürk, 2012).

### **Reliability and Validity in Mixed-Method Researches**

In order to ensure validity or the legitimacy in mixed-method researches, five types of validity are used such as internal-external internal validity, weakness reducing validity, sample integration validity, and multiple validity (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004). In this study, all of these checks were completed as detailed below.

Internal-external validity is about the extent to which the researcher reflects the subjective or natural views of the participants and how objectively the matter of study is handled (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). In this study, the views of the participants were recorded and transcribed under the supervision of the researchers and an independent expert after confirmation from the participants was obtained in order to ensure internal-external validity.

Reducing validity weaknesses can be achieved by combining two or more approaches in one study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This thrust particularly concerns the difference between the subjective and objective realities. In searching to fulfill that requirement, participants' opinions were sought about the questionnaire items to reveal what the items meant to the participants after the participants completed the questionnaire.

Sample integration validity relates to delivering results as required by the nature of the quantitative and qualitative method. In this study, quantitative data were compared with the related studies and generalizable results were selected. As for the qualitative data, they were evaluated in the scope of the study group and in-depth and extensive results were obtained without any generalization.

Multiple validity is ensured by meeting respective criteria of validity for each of the qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the present case, expert opinion was taken for the questionnaire as a means of quantitative method; the clarity and intelligibility of the questions were screened in a pilot test with ten school principals. Validity and reliability of qualitative research can be achieved by striving for the standards of credibility, transferability, consistency and averrable (Mills, 2003). We performed the following procedures in this part of the qualitative study.

In order to ensure credibility, the participants were informed about the purpose and content of the research before the implementation phase. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder upon the participants' permission. The audio data were confirmed by obtaining the participants' approval and recorded as a text. For a more objective consideration by the researchers, an outsider expert was asked for his/her opinion about conformity between categories and themes noted by coders in the study.

In order to ensure transferability, the questions about the purpose of the research were stated clearly and explanation was given as to where and how the study was conducted. In addition, the participants' views were presented in the form of raw data.

In relation to consistency, the results were reviewed for coder agreement at each step of analysis by both the researchers and the independent expert. The consistency of the independent coders' results was calculated by using the Formula (consensus/dissensus + dissensus > .70) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Attention was paid by the researchers for similarity of the research environment during the interviews, the order of the questions addressed, the time taken to answer the questions and so on.

As the last component of multiple variety, assert ability was ensured by portraying the responses together with the reporting respondents. Moreover, each stage of the data collection and data analysis were explained in detail. The raw data and the analyzed data obtained in the research were stored in separate files and listed for further analysis in case of need.

## **Findings**

This part of the paper is devoted to findings in a particular order. First of all, it gives an account of the priority order attributed to paintings by school principals and also reasons for such preferences. Then, results regarding the relationship between the principals' branch of teaching and how often they attend artistic events are provided. The last part of the findings is constituted by the relationship between the frequency of attending such events and the art movement they tend to favour.

- 1) The primary preference of school principals for paintings was found to be associated with green consciousness, ways of thinking, ethical principles, perception of time, historical values and an artistic perspective. The categories and sub-categories that fall under these themes are given in Table 2.

Table 2  
*School Principals' First Preference for Paintings*

Theme	Category	Sub-category	f
Green consciousness	Nature's features	Reality of nature	3
		Relaxing	2
		Beauty of nature	2
	Protecting the nature	Protecting the nature	5
	Total		12
Ways of thinking	Concrete thinking	Creativity	3
		Symbolic thinking	2
	Abstract thinking	Scientific thinking	2
		Questioning	2
	Critical thinking	Different viewpoints	2
	Total		11
Ethical principles	Colonialism	Capitalism	4
	Justice	Securing the justice	3
	Equality	Discrimination	2
	Total		9
Time perception	Importance of time	Proper use of time	3
		Time-place-space relation	2
	Comprehending time	Inflection of time	1
	Total		6
Historical values	Information about the Turkish history	Information about the Turkish history	2
		Teacher leadership	2
	Leadership		
	Total		4
Artistic perspective	Arousing interest in art	Visual sensitivity	2
	Total		2

As can be seen in the Table 2, six themes were extracted from the school principals' main preference for paintings as *green consciousness*, *ways of thinking*, *ethical principles*, *time perception*, *historical values*, and *artistic perspective*. The first theme, green consciousness (f= 12) was divided into two categories as nature's features (f=7) and protecting the nature (f=5). The second theme, ways of thinking (f=11), was sub-divided into the categories of concrete thinking (f=2), abstract thinking (f=5), and critical thinking (f=4). Another theme, ethical principles (f=9) consisted of *justice* (f=3), *equality*(f=2) and *colonialism* (f=4). The theme of time perception (f=6) was explicated in connection with the *importance of time* (f=3) and *comprehending time*(f=3). One other theme, historical values (f=4), was found to cover *information about the Turkish history* (f=2) and *leadership*(f=2). Lastly, *artistic perspective*(f=2) was explained in the category *arousing interest in art*(f=2).

Below are some citations from the principals' statements regarding their first preferences for paintings in school:

"The fact that an environment whose disappearance we feel in all ways in city centers which are becoming piles of concrete tells the importance of nature to students with this painting." (P9-12, *Green consciousness, Protecting the nature*)

".....This painting leads to thinking, questioning and searching for meaning. Students thus turn to this way of thinking." (P33- 8, *Ways of thinking-Critical thinking*)

"It reflects the artist's political sensitivity. An artist must oppose the exploitation of man by man. This painting shows students the exploitation behind the veil of justice, equality." (P1-30, *Ethical principles –Justice and equality*)

"It teaches lessons to students about the proper and efficient use of time." (P8-29, *Time perception, Importance of time*).

"The teacher is a leader and sets an example for the students behind him." (P32-1, *Historical values, Leadership*).

"To arouse interest in students by drawing attention to the concept of mythology and art period" (P37-2, *Artistic perspective, Arousing interest in art*)

- 2) The principals' second preference for paintings in schools was found to relate to five themes as green consciousness, concept of time, artistic sensitivity, ways of thinking, and human values. The categories and sub-categories of these themes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3  
*School Principals' Second Preference for Paintings*

Theme	Category	Sub-category	f
Green consciousness	Environmental consciousness	Protecting the environment	10
Artistic sensitivity	Artistic perspective	Encouraging art	6
Concept of time	Time perception	Proper use of time	5
Ways of thinking	Critical thinking	Multi-dimensional thinking	3
Spirit	Human values	Honesty	2
		Love	2

As seen above, five themes emerged from analysis of the school principals' second preference for paintings in school: *green consciousness, artistic sensitivity, concept of time, ways of thinking, spirit*. *Green consciousness* (f=10) was discussed in connection with the category of *environmental consciousness*(f=10); *artistic sensitivity* in connection with *artistic perspective* (f=6); and *concept of time* (f=5) was explained with regards to *time perception* (f= 5). The theme *ways of thinking* (f=3) was found to cover *critical thinking*(f=3) and *spirit* (f=4) covered *human values*(f=4) in the analysis.

Below are given some opinions of school principals about the second preferential paintings for their schools:

“It shows students how technology and industry threaten nature.” (33- P4, *Environmental consciousness*)

“Reflecting Istanbul to students from an artistic point of view with the concepts that are the building blocks of art such as balance-perspective and composition” (31-P22, *Artistic sensitivity*)

“It is a picture that conveys to the audience (students) that life is always a cycle that continues with a beginning and an end.” (14-P23, *Concept of time*)

“In such confusion, each student can draw a different message from a different part of the picture where they find themselves.” (27-P8, *Ways of thinking*)

“With this painting, it conveys the feelings of honesty, innocence and compassion.” (17-P13, *Human values*)

- 3) Before analyzing the painting preferences of school principals for their school, we took a glance at whether there was a difference between the frequencies of school principals' participation in artistic activities. The results obtained are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Chi-square Test on Difference between Frequencies of School Principals' Participation in Artistic Activities*

Frequency	Observed	Expected	Residual	Chi-square	p
Low	19	12.7	6.3	4.789	.091
Intermediate	10	12.7	-2.7		
High	9	12.7	-3.7		
Total	38	12.7			

As revealed in Table 4, there is no significant difference as regard to how often school principals attend artistic activities. Although the frequency for most of the participants was low, the individual values were seen to be close to each other.

- 4) The findings on frequency of the school principals' choosing each art movement were obtained by applying the chi-square test art movement. The results are displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5

*School Principals' Preferred Art Movements*

Art movement	Observed	Expected	Residual	Chi-square	p
Surrealist	7	9.5			
Impressionist	6	9.5			
Realist	19	9.5	2.5	12.73	.005
Abstract	6	9.5			
Total	38	9.5			

As also can be seen from Table 5, there is a significant difference between art movements preferred by school principals ( $p < .05$ ). While realistic paintings proved to be the most frequently preferred art movement, the least popular ones were abstract and impressionist paintings. It is interesting to note that although there was no difference between the frequencies of school principals' participating in artistic activities, they differed in their preferred painting movements. It can be inferred that the frequency of school principals' attendance at artistic activities did not affect their preferred art movement in this study.

The results of this study became more complete with the use of qualitative and quantitative analyses. In other words, the quantitative methods showed that there was no difference between the frequency of artistic activities among principal sand that realism was the prominent art movement preferred implicitly by the respondents. It suggests that the school principals in this study converge in terms of their approach to combining education and art. The qualitative method in this study revealed that the school principals converge according to the themes that underpin their first and second preferred paintings. To put it another way, the items were selected by the school leaders with similar motivations. In summary, the comparable results of qualitative and quantitative methods indicated that the findings from both components of the study align.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study investigates the reasons for choosing of certain paintings by school principals, the difference between how often they attend artistic activities, and the differences between the art movement suggested by their preferred paintings. First, qualitative and then quantitative research results were interpreted and discussed in line with the convergent derived from the two methodological approaches used in the mixed method study.

According to the study results, the school principals opted for the first and second preferences drawings based on a set of similar considerations. All of these considerations are listed and discussed in a certain order. Also, the findings on the frequency of school principals' attending artistic events and differences of their preferred art movements were examined.

In search of answer for the first research question above, it was seen that the primary preferences of the principals were clustered in the themes *green consciousness* and *ways of thinking*. There were also other dominant themes such as *ethical principles* and *time perception*. The rest of the themes, *historical values* and especially *artistic perspective*, were less emphasized.

When the relevant literature was reviewed, no study was seen to directly cast light on this topic. For this reason, the study results were interpreted by examining the themes in the painting preferences obtained here. To start with, the fact that images concerning green consciousness were selected in the first place might have two implications: School principals wish to inject nature-inspired emotions to their students or they want to persuade students to protect the nature. According to Louv (2017); children are driven by their emotions so living in nature and exploring it as they wish are the most important factors for development of children's inner worlds. Wilson's (1986) biophilia hypothesis (human's tendency to make contact with other life forms) has been supported by studies that reveal the positive effect of one-to-one relationship with nature on human health, concentration capability, creativity and environmental responsibility. Therefore, the probability that school principals want to convey green consciousness to students through painting is justified by the existing literature.

As another obvious motivation for principals' choosing the paintings, *ways of thinking* was ranked second in the scheme of themes. They expressed that paintings have the potential to improve students' thinking skills through scientific thinking, symbolic thinking, creativity, questioning and diversity of perspectives. Being an educational leader means motivating others and creating an environment where students can adopt a variety of approaches. In this case, the educational leader is expected to take necessary and supportive steps to open up different ways of thinking for the students through artistic and scientific activities.

Bosh argues that there are no talentless people; rather, there are people with different talents (as cited by Çellek, 2003). We think that if all educators believe so and introduce students to the art of painting/drawing to unearth their specific talents, they can play a mediating role then. In particular, an assortment of different paintings can be offered to students for the purposes of selection, interpretation and renewal so that their creativity can be triggered. Read (2018) stated that any single method could not suffice to teach such skills as thinking, creativity, questioning, critical thinking, and so on but it could be achieved only if art is treated as one's right hand. In addition, San (2004) argues that art aims to supervise and develop the creative and productive forces of the individual during development of personality as a harmonious whole. It is known that one of the artistic fields to attain this aim is visual arts.

The third main theme explaining the painting choice related to ethical principles. It implies that school leaders want their students to be aware of justice, equality and negative consequences of capitalism and to act accordingly. It can be considered more than plausible that school leaders expect students to beware of injustice, inequality and negative implications of capitalism. As a matter of fact, one of the main objectives of schooling is to raise students in a moral sense. It is carried out by means of religious culture and moral knowledge classes and seminars on values education. Art is also a medium for teaching these values. As an example, it was used as the main instrument in children's drama during early years of the Republic for preaching moral values, virtues of a citizen, and prospective representatives of the Republic (Okurlar, 2010). The view that painting as a branch of art has the potential to help teach ethical principles to students seems to be in parallel with the statement above. The concept of ethics, which is considered as the practice of ethics, has an important place in regulating people's lives and behaviors. Morality rules play a major role in training the social aspect of human and affect their inner world at one time (Güriz, 2003). For this reason, school principals might expect to benefit from painting/drawing in inculcating moral behaviours on the basis of ethical concerns. On the other hand, Okudan (2010) found that school leaders do not approve of values students acquired outside the school so they wish to replace those values with different ones that were more ethically based. In the current study, the school principals' reference to ethical principles as a reason for exhibiting pieces of art on school's walls can be explained with this belief. Although some thought can be given to why school principals want to teach ethical principles to students, it seems far more meaningful to notice that the school leaders attach a crucial role to the art of painting in gaining of ethical principles.

The fourth important point in school principals' choosing certain paintings was noted as time perception. It means that school principals want to draw students' attention to the meaning and importance of time. As a fact, time is a crucial and mysterious concept with its unique values since it is a scarce resource impossible to be accumulated, reproduced, reversed, borrowed or lent. In the physical context, the past and the future of time are among the cosmos controversial theories (Einstein, 1997). Yet, it is understood that the art of painting plays a role in pursuing a well-informed life by realizing the importance of spending time wisely. Klein (2011) points out that we should not only realize the moments that make up life, but also be careful to enjoy it. It is revealed that the art of painting can be useful in raising this awareness. In addition, by reflecting time and transferring a cross-section from time, painting has been the source for analyzing the relations of the past and present. Even in paintings that do not handle the idea of time, many works improve students' attitudes towards time. Due to the above mentioned reasons, it can be said that inclusion of pictures and art in school would contribute to students' self-consciousness.



In the scheme of themes, historical values took the fifth priority. The underlying ideas were the Turkish historical values and teachers' task of building the future under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Republic of Turkey. It was regarded as an important educational activity to remind students how hard Turkish people fought for winning the Independence War and gaining a victory in the National Struggle for eternizing the Republic, by means of paintings. Ortaylı (2017) portrays the values of Turkish history and the importance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as follows: "It is not common place to come across leaders in every country who change the course of history, put a seal on it, or prevent great dangers. Atatürk is a genius rarely seen in the world history. After World War I, when no defeated nation showed resistance, he challenged the world with civilians and soldiers beside him." From the perspective of the respondents here, integration of art with the turning point of the Turkish history to find its place in education was seen as an important value. Also at the universal level, influential artists are acknowledged (Picasso's Guernica, Kathe Kollwitz's works, Francisco Goya's work on May 3, 1808, etc.) as they showed opposition to fateful happenings such as war, death, diseases, etc. by painting. Similarly, these pieces of art can be used to raise students' awareness of the dire events in history.

As the sixth essential connotation of the first preferred paintings of school principals, the theme of artistic perspective appeared with one category under it: *arouse interest in art*. In addition, the second preference for paintings of school leaders yielded *artistic perspective* as a similar category falling under the theme *artistic sensitivity*. It is surprising that although the idea of increasing artistic sensitivity was the last important theme in school principals' first preferences, it did not come up to much higher ranks in their second preferences considering that the main idea is art.

The reasons for the principals' selection can be grounded on the views in the literature about arousing interest in art and gaining an artistic perspective. To arouse interest in art refers to the aesthetic relationship among objective realities within the framework of art, nature and human. By instinct, human strives to bring an aesthetic order to his environment. Order is the starting point of understanding one's own existence. In this respect, art is an act of bringing order. According to Hutcheson, every human being has a natural, innate sense of beauty and the meaning of art can be captured by this sense of inner beauty (Erinç, 2004: 22). In our study, the school principals seem to have justified their preferred pictures based on the assumption that these sensitivities and characteristics can be taught to students by artistic means. On the other hand, artistic point of view has to do with differences in individuals' level of interpretation, meaning and importance of art. Artistic point of view is one of the reasons why the definition of art cannot be clearly put forth and it arises from the attitudes of the audience. As Oscar Wilde put it, "The faces of an object lie in the cultural level of those who watch it." In the current situation, thus, artistic values can be strengthened by appreciating art, giving value to artists, and seeing art as an integral part of life.

In reference to the third research question, it was observed that the school principals showed no marked difference in the frequency of attending artistic events and the overall frequency was low. The last research question probed the art movements predominantly preferred by school principals. It was seen that realism became the most opted artistic rationale. The fact that similar themes (scenery paintings, still-life paintings, and so on) were mentioned under both the first and the second preferences for paintings imply that the principals do not move away from common views. In other words, the fact that most of the principals selected the same type of art imply that they avoid taking the responsibility for infusing diverse perspectives to students.

So it seems to have been proved that the quantitative data were a complement to the qualitative data in our study. However, the reasons can be distinct as to why school administrators focused on a number of familiar opinions in their painting preferences and as to why realism emerged as the most relevant art movement. The latter can be accounted for by the principals' narrow visual accumulation and lack of knowledge about alternatives (cubism, surrealism, abstract, etc.). This also explains the similar frequency of school principals' being audience of artistic activities and not being able to make a difference compared to their counterparts in this study. In a study conducted by Račevska and Tadinac (2019), a relationship was found between the music preferences of individuals and their distinct stands. We can infer that there may be a relationship between preferences in paintings, another branch of art, and individuals' being extraordinary. It hence leads to a high probability that school administrators would make the same or similar choices and that they would stick to the perspectives on the same subjects. Moreover, the equivalence of school principals in frequency of attending artistic activities and hinting the same art movement might cause them to be uniform. This may block the way for diversity and unlikeness in educational setting.

### **Recommendations**

To raise awareness of students about nature and help them adopt historical values, special events or occasions can be arranged such as painting competitions and art exhibitions.

Owing to the fact the art of painting infuses special emotions and leaves an impression, initiative can be taken to involve parents (via school-family relationships-meetings, out of school activities etc.) besides teachers in art so that they can guide their children for art and the children can adopt different thinking skills.

Art helps to smooth humans' fanatical tendencies and excessive passions in humans and this can be translated into students' adaptation to ethical principles. Like the next ring of a chain, art teachers and psychological counsellors can work together to deal with students' social and psychological dilemma by using the art of painting as an effective channel.

In order to give artistic insight to students, a special environment can be created where students do not lose contact with art. Also, workshops can be planned on a regular basis in cooperation with artistic training institutions.

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