A Cross Analysis on Social Justice Leadership of School Principals in Turkey and Greece

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Abstract

Although social justice is an old concept, practical applications of it in education are relatively new and highly dependent on contextual variables, just as social justice leadership. Social justice leadership has been fostered by various distinctive factors in western and eastern societies. From this point of view, the authors attempt to compare Greek and Turkish school principals' social justice leadership to reveal the similarities and differences between them. In this qualitative case study, 12 principals from Greece and Turkey were interviewed through in-depth semi-structured interview questions. Comparative analysis was employed to identify the similarities and differences between principals' practices, internal and external social justice leadership resources, supports and hindrances. The results show that while the principals adopt universal social justice principles, they also use their own methods because of their schools' contexts and their life experiences.

Keywords

Social justice leadership, principals, comparative analysis, Greece, Turkey

Un Análisis Cruzado Sobre el Liderazgo en Justicia Social de los Directores de Escuelas en Turquía y Grecia

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Resumen

Aunque la justicia social es un concepto antiguo, sus aplicaciones prácticas en la educación son relativamente nuevas y dependen en gran medida de variables contextuales, al igual que el liderazgo para la justicia social. El liderazgo para la justicia social ha sido fomentado por varios factores distintivos en las sociedades occidentales y orientales. Desde este punto de vista, los autores intentan comparar el liderazgo para la justicia social de los directores de escuela griegos y turcos para revelar similitudes y diferencias entre ellos. En este estudio cualitativo, se entrevistaron a 12 directores de Grecia y Turquía a través de preguntas semiestructuradas en profundidad. Se realizó un análisis comparativo para identificar las similitudes y diferencias entre las prácticas de los directores, los recursos de liderazgo para la justicia social internos y externos, los apoyos y los obstáculos. Los resultados muestran que, si bien los directores adoptan principios universales de justicia social, también utilizan sus propios métodos debido a los contextos de sus escuelas y sus experiencias de vida.

Palabras clave

liderazgo en justicia social, directores, análisis comparativo, Grecia, Turquía

I n Since the existence of humankind, there have been differences deriving from various factors such as cultures (Komolthiti, 2017), migration (Koshel & Yakovenko, 2020) and socio-economic backgrounds (Bucciol et al. 2015) etc. among people. With the effect of globalization and migration, the gap between people deepens mostly at socio-economic level in inequality and injustice contexts. The basic way to eliminate socio-economic injustice in societies is to provide quality education to disadvantaged groups and raise their living standards by providing justice in education (Van Steenwyk, 2014). As a result of accessible quality education, the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged individuals will gradually close and social progress of societies will occur. The right to education of children all over the world is guaranteed by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UN 1989, Article, 28). However, this does not mean that every child receives an equal and quality education. Although it is aimed to provide a structured, egalitarian formal education, factors such as students' life experiences, socio-economic status can hinder their access to quality education (Akkan and Buğra, 2021).

The way to minimize the problems and establish social justice for everyone in education naturally passes through school leaders (Koçak, 2021; Shaked, 2019). Social justice in education includes, equality, integration of disadvantaged groups into the education and society, providing equal opportunities, increasing diversity, reduciñg exclusion among students (Blackmore, 2009; Theoharis, 2007). It is the principals who will implement social justice in their schools by minimizing the injustice in the distribution of resources in the society, raising awareness for disadvantaged students, and bringing a more democratic and just order (Dahl et al., 2004). The principals ignoring such issues cannot create a school that will benefit all children (Blackmore, 2009). School principals have important roles in implementing social justice, but if they do not fulfill their roles, they cause great harm both educationally and administratively. Theoharis (2007) states that besides the basic leadership characteristics of socially– just school leaders, they should also have broad knowledge, skills and awareness, develop social inclusion and provide opportunities for everyone, improve the educational environment, create a sense of belonging in all stakeholders and achieve academic and personal student success (as cited in Arar et al., 2016). Furthermore, in their study Slater et al. (2019) revealed that principals exhibited transformative leadership characteristics when implementing social justice in their schools. Also, social justice leaders will ensure that education becomes more meaningful for all stakeholders, especially for disadvantaged groups. In this way, through education, they will climb up the steps from 'failed citizenship', to 'transformative citizenship' (Banks, 2017) throughout their lives.

Since Social Justice Leadership (SJL) practices are highly dependent on contextual features (Furman, 2012; MacDonald, 2020), generalizations cannot be made. As cultural and social structures change from culture to culture, the understanding of social justice or inequality will also change for people in these cultures (Ming Chiu & Walker, 2007). SJL takes shape according to the needs of the context and gains new meanings (Harris, 2014; Gairín & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2014). However, in SJL, while traditional, political and cultural elements are more influential in non-western societies (Ming Chiu & Walker, 2007; Oplatka & Arar, 2016; Qureshi et al., 2020), it manifests itself in contexts such as gender, disability, increasing the quality of education, social inclusion, prevention of discrimination, etc. in western societies (Bruner, 2008; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012; Place et al., 2010). For this

reason, more researches on SJL in education in different contexts are needed to understand it better. When the cross-cultural comparative studies on SJL in education in context of Turkey are considered, it will be seen that the researches have been done in context of Middle East (Israel)-Turkey (Arar et al., 2016), and Middle East (Palestine) and North America (Haiti) and Turkey (Arar et al., 2019). Literature shows that there is no study on SJL in education between Europe and Turkey. Although Greece has border and some similarities with Turkey, they have different cultures, religions, contexts. For this reason, it is thought that this study will fill an important gap in the literature, considering the importance of SJL in different contexts. Considering this, the aim of this study is to compare school principals' SJL practices both in Turkey and Greece. For this purpose, the research sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. How do Greek and Turkish principals' SJL practices differentiate from or resemble each other?
2. Why do they act as Social Justice Leaders at their schools?
3. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder their SJL practices?

As SJL is highly affected by the context, it will be meaningful to outline the characteristics of educational systems of two countries.

The Greek Educational System and Social Justice

The Greek educational system has remained relatively stable and unaltered in its fundamental principles for a number of decades. The central administration for education across all fields, agencies and levels is the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs that has organized a system characterized by a notable degree of centralization; an OECD report (2018) described it as 'highly centralized' and this does not allow the schools to address their specific needs, but recent legislature indicate a "transition phase" (Katsigianni & Ifanti, 2020).

Greek education has sustained various stages of development and evolution in the last 200 years of the independent Greek state, demonstrating a strong commitment to social equity and an egalitarian society, as OECD report denoted (2018). Stemming from the Constitutional Reform of 1975, a series of laws formed the basis for numerous institutions and provisions demonstrating that the State took more steps for education as a social right. As the Constitution declares, 'Education is a basic mission of the State and it aims at the moral, intellectual, professional and physical education of the Greeks (Art. 16).' It also states that 'All Greeks have the right to free education, at all levels, in state schools. The State supports the students who need help or special protection, depending on their abilities (Art. 16).' The official policy for pupils' diversity at schools is carried out via a multicultural approach that should protect the principles of human rights (Cabredaki et al., 2006).

Although it is stated in the Constitution, Greece ranks as one of the worst-performing country in terms of social justice including equitable education (Schraad-Tischler & Schiller, 2016). This view is largely interpreted by the crises the country has faced in recent years. Some

of the problems of the Greek system are lack of support services for students with special needs, cultural differences and widespread lack of collaboration of school community (Lazaridou et al., 2020). However, there have been provisions pointing to a different direction; in their studies, Hatzichristou et al (2020) highlight the importance of social justice principles at the level of both theory and practice, whereas Rentzi (2022), Tsitsimpis (2020) and Gkofa (2017) demonstrate the significant role of the school leader of social justice in the implementation of co-educational practices for all students.

The Turkish Educational System and Social Justice

The general aim of Turkish National Education is both to increase the welfare of Turkish citizens and Turkish society and to support and accelerate economic, social and cultural development in national unity and integrity, and finally to make the Turkish Nation a constructive, creative and distinguished partner of contemporary civilization (National Education Basic Law, 1973). Compulsory education in Turkey is 12 years as 4+4+4 and divided into 3 stages: primary, secondary and high school. Schools under compulsory education are state-funded and education in these schools is provided free of charge in line with social justice.

As in Greek Constitution, Turkish Constitution mentions about social justice. However, while school principals' responsibilities, duties and powers are described clearly and in detail to ensure the fulfillment of the administrative duties of principals in regulations, they do not have a concrete job definition for social justice (Gündüz & Balyer, 2013; Kondakçı et al., 2016). It is possible to find many direct or indirect articles related to distributive, recognizing and participatory dimensions of social justice in the laws, regulations, development plans regulating the education system, including the constitution. However, the practices are insufficient according to the researches (Çam Tosun, 2021).

The Turkish Education system has a centralized management structure and the only institution responsible for the development of education policies is the Ministry of National Education. In centralized education systems, school improvement models are applied in the same way to every school context. This mostly ignores the social and economic disparities eliminating the students' access to quality education (Kondakçı & Beycioğlu, 2020). But, considering the "2023 Educational Vision Document" declared by the government in 2018, it can be said that it bears the traces of social justice in terms of students, teachers, financing etc. by prioritizing the ones with unfavorable conditions.

Methodology

Research Model

This study was carried out using one of the qualitative research methods, the case study design. It aims to answer the question: "How do Turkish and Greek school principals show differences and similarities in perceiving and practicing their roles while promoting social justice at their

schools?" For this reason, taking cultural and contextual differences (Cheong, 2000; Dimmock & Walker, 2000) into account, comparative case study was utilized to explore Turkish and Greek school principals' SJL perceptions, praxis and implications. Comparative case studies entail the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases sharing a common focus (Goodwick, 2014).

Participants

The participants of the research consist of six Greek and six Turkish principals from various cities of Greece and Turkey. In the selection of the participants, the criterion sampling method was applied. Criterion sampling is the determination of people as participants who are thought to give rich data within the scope of the research (Özkan, 2019). The characteristics of the principals as social justice leaders were accepted as criteria expressed by Theoharis (2009). These criteria are, besides the basic leadership characteristics, to develop social inclusion and provide opportunities for everyone at their schools, to improve the educational environment, to create a sense of belonging in all stakeholders and to achieve academic and personal student success (as cited in Arar et al., 2016). Based on principals' work such as academic success, social inclusion of students, creating equal opportunities for stakeholders etc. at their schools, the educational authorities determined the participants. The characteristics of principals that helped the authorities to choose them as social justice leaders are as follows:

1. Making their schools a student-centered environment
2. Having a commitment to social justice while empowering their staff/students
3. Giving priority to achievement for all students in different educational areas
4. Valueing students' socio-cultural and socio-economic background

Demographics of school principals who participated in the study are as follows.

Table 1
Details of Turkish and Greek Principals' Profiles

	Age	Gender	Dur. as Principal	Total service	school location	school population	Teachers no	Profile of school
Greek Principals								
GP 1	63	M	20	35	Urban	180	20	middle and upper-class students, immigrants
GP2	59	F	13	31	Urban	190	20	middle upper-class students, few immigrants
GP3	52	M	9	25	Urban	150	20	middle- class students, immigrants, few Roma
GP4	55	M	20	31	Semi-rural	100	15	middle-low-class students, immigrants

GP5	53	F	7	31	Suburban	100	15	middle-low-class students, some immigrants
GP6	54	F	4	30	Rural	90	15	Middle-low-class students, immigrants, Roma
Turkish Principals								
TP1	32	M	4	9	Urban	365	32	Middle and low-class students, immigrants, different ethnic groups
TP2	42	M	13	22	Rural	162	13	Middle-low-class students, different religious denominations
TP3	38	M	4	15	Rural	1054	56	Low-class students, immigrants, different ethnic groups
TP4	38	M	5	15	Urban	1013	64	Middle and low-class students, immigrants, different religious denominations and ethnic groups
TP5	37	M	8	13	Urban	20	10	Middle and low-class students, immigrants,
TP6	**56**	**M**	**14**	**30**	**Rural**	**620**	**39**	**Middle and low-class students, immigrants, different ethnic groups**

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool is a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. While creating it, researchers made use of similar researches on SJL in education. The first part of the form includes the personal information of the participants and their schools' features. In the second part, there are open-ended questions aiming to reveal principals' social justice practices in their schools and the problems they encounter and the support they receive. Also, the researchers consulted an expert academic having deep knowledge and conducted many researches on SJL during the development of the tool. The tool was piloted with two school principals prior to its use. In the pilot application, two principals working in the suburbs and rural areas participated in the research. At this stage, the expert was in contact with the researchers and evaluated the researchers' approach to the process. The data and the analyses were shared with the expert and he supported the researchers with feedback. As a result of the pilot application and the feedback, the data collection tool got its final shape.

Data Analysis

The data recorded with the permission of the participants during the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and Marshall and Rossman's (2016) analysis procedure was applied to the data. The procedure includes organization of findings, construction of categories and themes, examination of emergent hypotheses and searching for different meanings of the themes. To increase the validity and reliability, the transcription of the interviews and the emerging themes were shared with the participants and they were asked to confirm. Besides this, the researchers were in contact with each other at every stage of the research to cross-check. Moreover, direct citations were included in the report to illustrate.

Findings

Depending on the research questions and the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the interviews were united under three themes: 1. Principals' SJL Practices, 2. Resources of SJL 3. Supports and Hindrances. The first theme has three sub-themes: SJL for Students, Teachers and Parents. differences and similarities for each theme were given under the same theme. While explaining each theme, quotations from the participants were included, and instead of using the real names of the participants, code names were used both for Greek and Turkish principals.

Principals' Social Justice Leadership Practices

The analysis reveals that there are similarities and differences between Turkish and Greek principals' practices in SJL. Their different and similar SJL practices for students, teachers and parents were presented under separate headings.

Social Justice Leadership for Students

One of the requirements of education is to focus on students who experience social, educational disadvantage and include them into the education system and minimize the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged students (Shaeffer, 2019). A Turkish principal similarly defined social justice as equality and considered all kinds of work at school as closing the gap between students and schools:

> I have made it a principle for myself that my local and foreign students must be at an equal level with my own child in every aspect. At this point, we try to close this gap by giving place to academic, sportive, cultural activities at school as well as improving its environment physically. (TP3)

Similarly, a Greek principal stated that he works to ensure that his students receive education at the level of the schools in advantageous regions:

> I not only wish the pupils in our school to receive the best they can, but I also wish that they receive education as good as students do in privileged areas. I try to deal with difficulties they face and find solutions to keep them happy at school. (GP1)

Some principals from both countries use projects as a tool to reduce the disadvantages of students, increase the quality of education and promote equity (Official Journal of the European Union 2009, C119/2). They also believe that the projects will help students widen their horizons. They state that projects provide the professional development of teachers as well (Biasutti et al., 2021):

> We carry out national and international projects to eliminate the disadvantages. We try to make students forget the disadvantages they have. While conducting them, we try to ensure that our teachers are involved in the process for their professional development. (TP4)

Similarly, a Greek principal providing education to lower-income-level students in the suburb of the city stated that she used projects (Tonner Saunders & Shimi, 2021) as a tool to ensure social justice: "Living in a small town, our pupils have rather limited opportunities to expand their horizons and I do whatever I can to remedy that, with various educational visits, exchange projects such as eTwinning or Erasmus+". (GP5)

Some of the principals stated that while trying to achieve social justice, they approached the situation considering the individual characteristics of each student. This is important in terms of the context sensitivity of SJL (Gairín & Rodriguez-Gómez, 2014; Beycioglu & Ogden, 2017). For example, a Turkish principal stated that he tried to create programs by determining the individual needs of students due to the dropout caused by the financial difficulties:

> Our school is in agricultural region, some of our students come to school a month later and leave two months earlier. We try to prepare individual programs for these students as much as we can, and we open courses on sports, music, painting, etc. so that they can improve their abilities. (TP1)

A Greek principal's remarks on solving problems reflect a similar approach:

> I generally do that by looking into the problem that a child faces, and then discuss with teachers. The next step would be to meet the child's parents and discuss with them. Collecting more information helps me to solve the problems. (GP2)

Besides the similarities in the practices between the two countries, there are also differences. For example, some of the Turkish principals stated that they considered social justice in terms of ability/capability (Sen, 2009): "Every student has a field in which he/she is talented. Besides academic and sports activities, we use different workshops in various fields such as drama, music, robotic coding so that our students can discover their own talents." (TP4)

Social Justice Leadership for Teachers

Greek and Turkish principals act situationally to ensure social justice among teachers. To make teachers happy at their schools, the timetables are organized according to the needs of each teacher. For example, a Turkish principal expressed it as follows:

> We ask teachers to write their requests about the timetables. We prioritize the teachers who are pregnant, breastfeeding or must take the kids to school... We pay attention to put teachers at ease and make them feel happy at school. (TP1)

Similarly, the Greek principal stated that he made timetables according to individual needs so that the teachers would be more productive and happy at school:

> I cannot decide how many hours each teacher would have because of laws, but I can organize the teachers' schedules according to their needs. I remember that a teacher had to commute every day from his hometown, a distance of 100 kilometres. It wouldn't be fair for him to start classes at 8. (GP3)

One of the similarities between the practices of the principals is that they approach teachers without giving importance to their political views. A Greek principal who was uncomfortable with discrimination in the past stated that he does not expose the teachers to the same situation:

> One of the things I disliked in the beginning of my career was that colleagues were often discriminated based on their political views, gender etc. and I promised to myself that I would never do that. Everyone has the right to lead their lives as they wish, as long as they don't interfere with others' rights. (GP6)

In line with the Greek principal's thoughts, a Turkish principal stated that he treated his teachers equally at school without paying attention to details: "Equal treatment for everyone is important. While preparing the timetable, I ask their wishes and try to distribute the number of lessons equally regardless of the teacher's union, political views or gender." (TP6)

One of the differences is that a few Turkish principals stated that they try to provide social justice at school by improving the physical conditions of school for both teachers: "The kitchen at school was deplorable. Our first job was to fix it. Then we renovated our teachers' room. We completely renewed our guidance service room because it is the most important unit of a school." (TP3)

Although principals have a key role in the development of the educational environment at school, teachers are the most important supporters. Ensuring teachers' participation in administration contributes to the creation of more effective education and teachers' embrace of the work. Being aware of this, the principals apply the democratic leadership model (Liggett, 2020) by including teachers' views in all activities. For example, while a Turkish principal expressed it as follows:

> 'One hand washes the other and both wash the face.' We are managers, the ones who improve the situations. While doing this, we make decisions together with our teachers. We involve them in the process and share the management with them. (TP4)

A Greek principal expressed it this way: "I try to have a good cooperation with them. When we hold a meeting with teachers, I listen to them and write down their objections so that we make decisions in a collective manner." (GP4)

Social Justice Leadership for Parents

Social justice for parents mostly concentrates on communication and valuing parents. The principals' courteous behavior towards all parents, their communication and valuing them as human beings are the behaviors to ensure social justice among parents. For example, a Greek principal stated that he approached parents as follows: "I treat them with the same respect regardless of their gender or social status. We can remember various instances of such discriminations in the society and that's not right." (GP6)

Similarly, a Turkish principal working in a refugee-intensive region stated that he also made home visits in addition to similar statements above: "We frequently make home visits to our students. Parents become very pleased. When they come to school, we welcome them and chat with them. Most importantly, we must make them feel valuable." (TP3)

It has been determined that the approaches of Turkish and Greek principals towards parents also diverge in several points. For example, a Greek principal stated that he tried to help parents by opening the school to them:

> School is an institution that is open to parents and the society: when the parents' association asks for our help, we offer them space in our school. Our school also offers rooms to the K.D.A.P. ('Centre of Creative Occupation for Children' to occupy children after school, by offering them activities while their parents are at work). (GP3)

Resources for Social Justice Leadership

The analyses show that the work of principals from both countries is based on the principals' own life experiences and internal motivation resources. (Arar et al., 2019; Yoeli & Berkovich, 2010) These resources include the desire to help, conscience, empathic skills, and religion. It indicates that the resources of social justice stem entirely from individual reasons. Only two Greek principals stated that while the motivation is mostly internal, albeit to a lesser extent, they also take into account the views of top management.

The practice of social justice is a form of empathy. One of the principals, expressing that empathy and conscience are the basis of social justice, addresses social justice practice in socio-economic and refugee dimensions:

> One of the most important factors in ensuring justice is conscience. Why shouldn't children in this region have access to every resource? Is it because they were born in this region or they fled from the war? So, the basic element of our job is conscience. (TP3)

Similarly, a Greek principal attributes the resource of his effort to internal reasons. He also recommends that helping people should not be done to gain admiration, but rather be done in secret: "I will say that it is not a case of getting more "Likes" on social media, or having people

applaud you. It is personal commitment, and you may just do it without anyone know about it." (GP3)

A Turkish principal attributes the reason for social justice to the education and religious belief he got in his family (Hodge, 2012):

> This is what we get from our family, as a requirement of our faith and humanity. We strive to be a good person. The way to do this is to ensure social justice where we are. Peace of mind and heart is above everything else. (TP6)

Besides positive situations, principals also encounter negative situations that sometimes demotivate them. The same is true for SJL. A Greek principal explained how she coped with it: "I can't always say that my efforts are unwavering, sometimes I lose hope. I remind myself why I chose this job and I say if I can help even a few people, then it's probably worth it." (GP6)

Unlike other Turkish and Greek principals, two Greek principals stated that they carried out social justice practices with the influence of external sources besides internal motivation sources. One of them stated it with the following sentences:

> I think, the factors that commit me to social justice are mainly internal; it's the moral and legal part of our profession, but it's also the fact that this position is something that the State has trusted me with and I have to set a positive example (GP4).

In conclusion, the quotations made under this theme show that the motivation sources of the principals in applying social justice are internal elements. Conscience, religion, the desire to do favor, etc. can be counted among the internal motivation sources. In addition, two Greek principals stated the external motivation sources such as pressure from the higher authorities and fulfilling the assigned task properly.

Supports and Hindrances for Social Justice Leadership

School principals face various problems while leading the social justice. These include particularly lack of resources, power conflict, regulations and local people. The majority of the principals state that the lack of resources is the most problematic issue. They say that the central government does not allocate enough resources to schools. Considering the negative effects of Covid-19 pandemic, we can say that the efforts to ensure social justice at schools have been interrupted (Yıldız & Akar Vural, 2020). For example, a Greek principal reveals that the pandemic is working against the disadvantaged groups, stating that the lack of resources has deepened with the effect of the pandemic:

> The first thing is lack of resources from the State. How can we offer equal opportunities if we have old buildings and deprived facilities?The situation got worse with the pandemic. Last year, most private schools started offering online education within a few days, when public schools closed down for months. (GP5)

Similarly, the Turkish principal stated that he tried to overcome the lack of resources with philanthropists (Gökçe and Uslu, 2018), but this also tired him out:

> I think the hardest part of the job is the financial aspect. Our school has no income. Our only income is the canteen rent. It is already closed during the pandemic. But we have continuous expenses. The only thing we do is to find philanthropists and cover the major expenses. It is very tiring. (TP3)

Another similar hindrance of two countries is the hindrance coming from the parents. Two principals from two countries summarized the situation in different dimensions:

> The same thing happens with parents. We invite them to discuss, but they are unwilling to share information with us. We have had parents with a formal report about their children's learning but they didn't want to present the report. Without the formal assessment, our hands were tied. (GP3)

The Turkish principal mentioned the problems arising from prejudices between local and refugee parents: "Some of our foreign parents think that their children aren't treated fairly… Some Turkish parents also say that foreign students are given more privileges. At this point, sometimes I feel like a 'wailing wall'." (TP1)

In addition to the similarities, there are also contextually different situations. For example, one of the Turkish principals highlighted the power conflict between local authorities and central government:

> We sometimes ask for help from the municipality. They say they will. The Directorate of National Education warns us not to get any help. The municipality and national education have different political ideologies. They tell us not to correspond with the municipality without writing a cover letter to them. Our work is left unfinished or not done at all. (TP5)

Another issue expressed by Turkish principals but not expressed by Greek principals is the practices of lawmakers. General regulations in centralized structures may not be suitable for every school. It is necessary to evaluate each school in its own context (Berkovich, 2014). The statements of a Turkish principal who had problems with this situation are as follows:

> A regulation about design workshops has been issued. The regulations and circulars are for Turkey wide. To establish the workshops, the school must be available both financially and physically. We try to adapt them to our school and naturally we have difficulties.(TP4)

All of the Turkish and Greek principals proudly stated that they received support from their colleagues. This mostly provides psychological support for the principals. For example, a Turkish principal stated that his colleagues shouldered the responsibilities and implemented projects in cooperation:

> I started here first as school principal. My colleagues helped me a lot in this regard. For example, when I said that I would write an Erasmus+ project, they asked "How can we help you?" It was the same for setting up the workshop rooms. Everyone did their best (TP4)

Greek principals stated that in addition to the support from colleagues, they mostly received a wider range of support such as teacher-parent association, local administrations…: "I get support from my colleagues, parents, the K.E.S.Y., various experts and services, the Directorate of Primary Education, and the School Board." (GP4)

A Greek principal also mentioned family support, unlike the others. He stated that the support he received from his family connected him to social justice: "Apart from the obvious (teachers, parents' association, and my superiors), I'll say it's my family that offers me moral support." (GP6)

In conclusion, although the problems faced by principals in Greece and Turkey are generally similar, there are also differences. These differences have contextual origins. In terms of support, all Turkish and Greek participants stated that the support came primarily from their colleagues. However, the support received by the Turkish principals is informal, while the support received by the Greek principals is mostly formal from official authorities. In this case, depending on the interviews, it can be said that Greek principals have officially received more support than Turkish principals.

Discussion

The aim of this research is to compare the SJL practices, hindrances and supports of school principals working in Turkey and Greece. Even though a comparison of qualitative data is complicated, it can provide us with major similarities and distinctions of interviewees, although they work in different nations with different contexts (Arar et al., 2016). The contexts of schools in two countries differ from each other in terms of administration, belief, culture and socio-economy, etc. So, the principals differ due to their individual and social characteristics in the practice of social justice (Bogotch & Shields, 2014). Although principals adopt global social justice principles, specific contextual issues that principal encounter and way of handling them are characterized by culture and its components at micro and macro level.

The principals' commitment to social justice in both countries is largely due to intrinsic motivation. This is in line with SJL research on principals in Turkey (Arar et al., 2016; Arar, et al., 2019) and in different regions (Miller, Roofe & Garcia-Carmona, 2019). Although it is not stated in the laws as officially, social justice is a part of principals' role informally and they prioritized it while leading to enable all students to reach quality education regardless of their circumstances. Their perceptions of SJL are constructed by their own values and educational perspectives. However, while the internal motivation sources of Turkish principals bear religious traces as well as universal values, it is not found in Greek principals' motivation sources. This shows that Turkish principals participating in the research take religious values into consideration more than Greek principals do. Greece is considered among the religious countries in Europe. However, Turkey was found to be more religious than Greece (Gallup International, 2015). It also reveals that a few Greek principals consider external sources such as top management alongside internal sources.

According to the analyses, all of the social justice leaders showed democratic leadership characteristics (Liggett, 2020). Principals' inclusion of school stakeholders in the decisions

ensures the formation of trust, cooperation and collective consciousness at schools. Democratization at work improves employee commitment and citizenship behavior and as a result, enhances the quality and reduces leaving the organization (Ahmed et al., 2019). In addition, it was determined that the principals showed transformative leadership (Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Slater et al., 2019) characteristics. The transformative leadership characteristics of principals manifest themselves not only in improving the physical structures of schools, but also in their efforts to create a fairer learning environment for students by trying to eliminate the disadvantages that both students and parents are inured to. Students whose disadvantages are eliminated will change their lives with education and live in better conditions. As a result, by getting rid of the 'failed citizenship' characteristics of their families, students will be more integrated into the society and climb the steps towards 'transformative citizenship' (Banks, 2017). Social justice is generally considered through socio-economic perspective. However, the findings showed that capabilities of students are used for closing the gap. Principals give opportunities to students to reveal their abilities to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being (Sen, 2009).

Principals in both countries stated that the resources provided to schools are insufficient for social justice. This is in parallel with the studies on SJL of school leaders (Arar et al., 2016; Arar et al., 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Furman, 2012). This hinders the practices of school principals to increase the quality of education and to ensure social justice at schools. If schools are adequately funded, both the institutional quality of schools and educational life of students will increase. The research also revealed that the biggest supporters of principals in both countries are teachers. Principals also strive to meet their teachers' individual needs to ensure that they are happy at school. Teachers' need satisfaction is a strong predictor of positive outcomes such as autonomy, competence and relatedness, which help them improve them professionally (Shim et al., 2022). When the supports of the higher authorities are considered, it can be said that social justice is handled more formally in Greece than in Turkey depending on principals' statements. It can be said that principals practise SJL due to their individual characteristics and that social justice does not get the attention it deserves from official authorities in Turkey.

Conclusion

SJL is influenced by the leaders' conceptions of the ideal society and ideal school (Arar & Oplatka, 2016). The principals in this study handled the SJL through their own cultural, national and individual value systems. SJ is embedded in cultural contexts principals bring with them to school. (Arar et al., 2019) For this reason, despite its limitations, more studies on SJL in education that examine the role of contexts should be conducted. Although the principals in this study work in two different contexts, they mostly exhibit similar and partially different practices to establish social justice at their schools. These practices are the reflection of their social justice perceptions. Studies should be conducted to increase the empathy and tolerance of both students and parents towards those who are different from them at schools. In this way, proactive measures are taken to reduce the problems faced by the principals while establishing social justice. According to the study, the principals approach SJL through individual

perspectives. Thus, not to leave the disadvantaged students at the mercy of principals, SJL should be embedded in principal training programs so that it can be handled formally. Lastly, more qualitative researches should be done focusing on different dimensions of SJL to understand it and its short and long-term effects on education and stakeholders of schools.

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