

Organizational Change Process: A Study in Turkish Primary Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to identify views of school principals and teachers about organizational change process at primary public schools in Turkey as regards content, context, process and outcomes dimensions. The paper employs a qualitative study internalizing phenomenological approach. Criterion sampling strategy is used to get an in-depth understanding of organizational change process at schools. With a purposive sample of five school principals and five teachers experiencing principal change are participated the study. Participants of the study are interviewed through utilization of semi-structured interviews. As a result of in-depth analysis of data, five categories of data emerged under the factors of content, context, process and outcomes of change. Themes emerged from the study are “exposure for change” as regards localized change initiatives at schools and change initiatives of Ministry of National Education for content dimension; “internal environment” in terms of school principal leadership, demands of students for context dimension; “external environment” regarding competitive pressures, government regulations, changing knowledge and technological changes, standardized schools and demands of parents for context dimension; “process of change” in terms of initiation, implementation, post-implementation for process dimension; “affective and behavioral reactions” as regards resistance and trust for change, openness to change, encourage change, satisfaction for outcomes dimension.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational change

Globalization, developments in information and communication technology, economic crises, demographic changes dramatically forces human being to change structural-functional aspects in his/her systems (Ragsdell, 2000). In other words, ‘change’ which is defined as the movement from one state to another (Hargreaves, 2004), is conceptualized as the involvement of organizations in order to respond to increasing diversity of people, advances in information and communication technology, improvements in information processing, dynamic and extensive competition of market place and governmental regulations (Burke, 2008; Dowson, 2003; Moorhead & Griffin, 1995). However, external forces are not the sole triggers of change. Besides, internal factors related to human resources issues and organizational process considerations are critical forces for change within organizations (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). The nature of the existing human force within the organization, the nature of the task at hand, the existing structural-functional characteristics, formalized lines of communication, formation of working procedures, managerial hierarchies, reward systems and disciplinary procedures are some of the internal forces of change (Leavitt, 1964).

Dimensions of change

Operation at individual, unit and organizational levels, being affected by internal and external dynamics, and having both positive and negative outcomes makes organizational change a very complicated issue. As a result different scholars advanced competing theoretical frameworks in order to conceptualize and implement organizational change process (E.g., Porras & Robertson, 1992; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Based on a review of 10 years scholarly works on organizational change, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) suggested a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing organizational change process. They suggested that organizational change analyses need to consider *content, context, process* and *outcome issues* (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Within this framework, the content of organizational change answers the question of 'what to change' with antecedents and consequences of change practices by providing vision and directing for change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Burke, 2008). In fact, content issues for organizational change include some major themes like mission, vision, strategy, and purpose of the organization, changes in organizational structure, technology, physical setting, leadership, job tasks and on-the-job behavior (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Porras & Robertson, 1992). However, not all organizations experience same changes; some organizations perform incremental changes while some of them experience radical changes. More specifically, transformational change that can also be accepted as radical change leads to change in organizations or component systems by shifting in their mission, underlined values, beliefs and organization structures. The other form of organizational change which is incremental change, also called as transactional change, brings new products, new systems, new technologies and processes to particular set of unit or division within the organizations (Schermerhorn, Hont & Osborn, 2005).

The context of organizational change comprises external and internal environments influencing change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). In that sense, external context factors encompass competitive pressures, governmental regulations, legislative and technological changes (Edelman, 1990; Hannan & Freeman, 1989; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985) while internal contextual factors cover some topics such as leadership, organizational culture and climate, change history of organization, attitudes towards change, trust in executive management and supervisor, participation and communication in change process (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Bouckennooghe, 2009; Damanpour, 1992; Devos, Buelens & Bouckennooghe, 2007).

Process factors that can contribute to successful change efforts account for the question of 'how and why to change' by considering processes of organizational change (Burke, 2008). Indeed, the complex psychology of change includes processes during planning and implementation of change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Indicators of change process are determined as change communication quality, participation, top management's attitudes towards change and support by supervisors (Bouckennooghe, Devos & Broeck, 2009).

Studies on the process of change provide some models emphasizing phases for implementation of change. To illustrate, Kurt Lewin's notion of unfreezing, moving and refreezing steps form the conceptualization of change process (Lewin, 1947). In the first step, present level of behavior is unfrozen by showing the discrepancy between current state and desired end state of the organization. The second step, moving the behaviors, values and attitudes of the organizations shifted to a new state through changes in organization structures and processes. The refreezing step establishes new state of the organization by means

of using supporting mechanisms (Burke, 2008; Cumming & Worley, 1997). Once Lewin provided organizational change processes, Schein and Lippitt elaborated Lewin's three stage change process procedure (Schein, 1987; Lippitt, Watson & Wesley, 1958). Specifically, Schein expanded the Lewin's three stages into three steps: unfreezing, changing and refreezing. Unfreezing of an organization is achieved by creation of motivation and readiness to change. Changing step includes cognitive restructuring of the organization while refreezing stage involves integration of organization members for change (Schein, 1987). Besides, Lippitt's three faces of change covers the need for change, creation of a need development of change relationship between change agent and organization, implementing change, stabilizing of change and providing a termination in the relationships between change agent and organizations (Lippitt et. al., 1958). In addition to these process models, recent studies such as Kotter (1995), Galphin (1996), Armenakis, Harris and Field (1999) also proposed widely used change process models.

On the other hand, process of change can also be analyzed by considering theoretical framework behind change process identified by Van de Ven and Poole (1995); with life cycle, teleological, dialectical and evolutionary theories. In fact, *life-cycle theory* explains change with a series of predetermined stages by setting institutional rules and developmental activities that the organizations have experienced in order to reach subsequent end state whereas *teleological theory* explains change as consequences of purposeful and adaptive acts without setting sequence of stages and prescribing prefigured rules. *Dialectical theory* elucidates change as the resolution of two different oppositions by producing a synthesis while *evolutionary theory* explains change as ongoing process that the organization is never static with a continuing competitive survival among organizations (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

As regards outcome factors, affective and behavioral reactions towards change are involved as reactions of the people within an organization. Indeed, affective and behavioral actions across a change intervention can be evoked by the members of the organization (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Attempts for coping with uncertainty of change are denial (e.g. thinking change is not needed) and resistance to change (e.g. absenteeism, sabotage, stalling, turnover), feelings of stress and cynicism, and reduced organizational commitment (Jaffe, Scott & Tobe, 1994). In addition to unintended responses, people may elicit affective reactions like commitment with showing psychological attachment toward organization, job satisfaction, anxiety, exhaustion and depression towards change.

The meaning of educational change

Current economic, social and political forces have combined to generate a climate that influences schools by imposing a feeling of a pressure to change. Indeed, technological advances and changing marketplace in the society influence the structure of educational systems. Ideologically, technologically and demographically change of society, changing individual child and family needs are all reflected in curriculum developments regarding personal and social education areas. Therefore, change in the environment has played an important role on education (Newton & Tarrant, 1992).

The scholarship surrounding educational change states the complexity of the phenomenon. Educational change is described by Fullan (1982, 1993, 2007) as a multidimensional process. He points that educational change is not a single entity even though simple level of innovation in a classroom is utilized (Fullan, 2007). Actually various type of change agents

in schools have roles in change process by influencing innovation decisions for a desirable direction (Rogers, 2003). Hereby, specific educational changes are embraced due to being desirable depending on certain educational values and meeting a given need better than the existing practices (Fullan, 2007).

Change process in schools can be handled in three broad phases in relation to outcomes: initiation, implementation and continuation and outcome as it is clear from Figure 1. In the first phase, which is also labeled as mobilization or adoption involves the processes leading up and comprising a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. It may take different form taking in a decision of a single authority or a broad base mandate. There are various factors affecting whether a change is initiated. These sources influencing initiation are existence and quality of innovations, access to innovations, advocacy from central administration, teacher advocacy, external change agents, community pressure, new policy, and problem-solving and bureaucratic orientations. Implementation or a phase of attempted use involves the first experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice. In fact, implementation consists of the processes that put an idea, program, set of activities or structures new to the people into the practice. In this sense, implementation is considered as the means to achieving certain outcomes. Characteristics of change for different stakeholders in local and governmental levels in terms of need of change, clarity about goals and needs, complexity; local factors like school district, principal, teacher, board of community and external factors such as government and other agencies are identified as factors affecting implementation process in schools. Continuation which is also called as institutionalization, incorporation or routinization is an extension of the implementation phase and refers to whether the change builds as an ongoing part of the system or becomes unnoticeable with a decision of discarding or by attrition. Specifically, continuation means decision about institutionalization of an innovation based reactions to change that depends on the implementation of the change into the system through policy, budget and time; committed and skilled school members and establishment of procedures for continuing assistance. In the end, these three phases are related to outcomes that refer to several different results depending on the objectives, especially whether or not the objectives are achieved, whether or not student learning is enhanced, and whether or not experiences with change increase subsequent capacity to deal with future changes. On the other side, outcomes could involve improved student learning and attitudes; new skills, attitudes, or satisfaction of teachers and other school personnel; or improved problem-solving capacity of the school (Fullan, 1982; 2007).

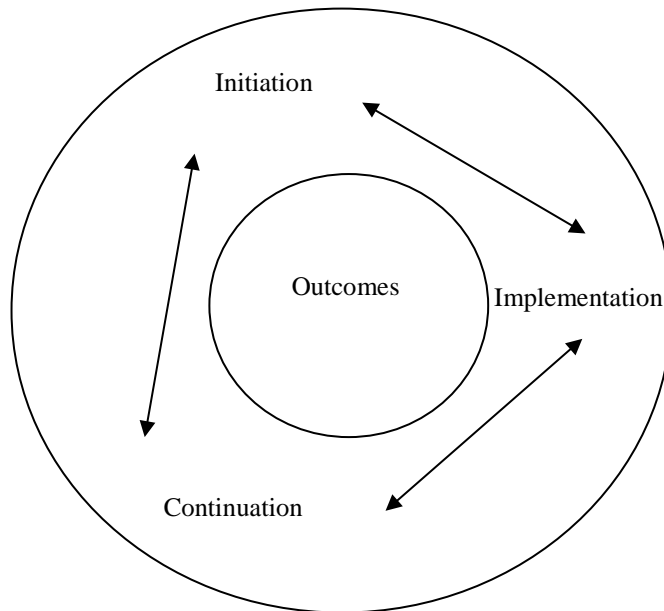


Figure 1. A simplified overview of the change process

Change in school organizations is complex and difficult to achieve. Without discussion of the change process, problems and the power that change creates may not be understood in schools. For successful implementation of an educational change, dynamics and implications of change should be understood effectively. However, most schools handle the issues just including educational innovation rather than studying the change process itself (Speck, 1996). At this point, it is necessary to consider three elements that cover beliefs and values as regarding what should change, knowledge and skills necessary for achieving change and outcomes in terms of indicating success (Timperley & Parr, 2005) and to internalize the suggestions provided by Fullan (1993); ability to work with polar opposites should be attained, dynamic interdependency of state accountability and local autonomy should be set, individuals and societal agencies should be combined, internal connection with the organization and external connection to the environment should be done.

CHANGE PROCESS IN TURKISH EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Turbulent external environments and dynamic internal environment are equally valid for educational organizations as well. These developments pose pressure on educational organizations to change aspects in their structural-functional characteristics. In fact, educational organizations also need to create more effective learning environments, respond educational needs more efficiently, generate knowledge, skills, attitudes and understandings for meeting the social needs of future, be flexible and develop organizational strategies in order to ensure sustainability and development of the individual and social life for getting individuals ready for change considering the needs from outside or inside the education system (Gökçe, 2005; Rosenblatt, 2004).

In parallel with global developments especially in the last quarter of the last century, changes concerning content and presentation of educational programs, educational technologies, learning-teaching process and the roles of teachers and students come forward in Turkey. Thus, flexible and a frame curriculum approach; constructivist understanding that possesses characteristics of pluralism, highlights uniqueness and diverseness, and focuses the attention to learning take part in traditional education approach aiming to teach compliance and obedience (Akpınar & Aydın, 2007; Hesapçıoğlu, 2001). Hence, understanding change in educational organizations and developing guidelines for practices become the top items in the agenda of educational scholars.

In Turkish Education System there are many change initiatives launched by Ministry of National Education (MONE) aiming at improving education quality by developing and disseminating innovative and research based education programs (Akşit, 2007; Gökçe, 2009), improving the quality of teacher, training information age individuals, bringing schools as learning organizations, creating democratic school cultures, and adopting development and modernization from pre-school education to higher education at all levels of education (Şişman & Taşdemir, 2008). Furthermore, MONE that generates educational politics concerning Turkish Education System by means of its centralized structure, transfers its authority in decision and control processes to schools anymore. Besides, MONE starts to improve administrative effectiveness of school managers, gets utmost benefit from information technologies in both administrative mechanisms and educational processes, and continues organizational restructuring practices within its organizational management scheme.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this context, developing technology, changing social structures and fluctuating economy create new environments and force structure of MONE and schools for change. Specifically, 36 thousand primary public schools with 410 thousand teachers and 12.5 million students constitute the basis of Turkish National Education System (MONE, 2011) and experienced changes in MONE deeply influence administrators and teachers of these schools. Therefore, studying views of teachers and school managers about change processes in schools will contribute to widening conceptual understanding of change initiatives in schools as well as generating practical guidelines in the implementation of change processes in educational context. Although there are numerous studies on organizational change in schools, these studies are based on local experiences of the authors, reflections on change implementation or presentation of narrow cases. Hence, this is a need for comprehensive investigation of change process in educational organizations by emphasizing different dimensions of the process. Based on these arguments, the purpose of this study is to identify views of primary public school principals and teachers on the content, context, process and outcomes dimensions of organizational change process in educational organizations. More specifically, the following research questions served as a guide for the study:

1. What kind of change took place in schools?
2. What are external and internal environmental forces influencing change in schools?
3. How do primary public schools undergo organizational change process?
4. What are the reactions towards change initiatives in schools?

Defining and understanding the phenomenon of change process from school princi-

pals' and teachers' perspectives and experiences is valuable for educators to implement successful changes. If the conditions for engaging in a meaningful change process and impediments and obstacles hindering change process are understood better, the school and the teachers will create and sustain change initiatives effectively. In this respect, this study contributes to the literature that indicates what the major factors in change process are and how organizational change process is handled in schools. In the literature, it seems that studies regarding attitudes and behavioral reactions towards change process are conducted. Actually, there is limited amount of available knowledge involving teachers' and principals' detailed roles and perspectives about change initiatives and what kind of stages are adopted within change process. Therefore, this study provides contextual-rich descriptions about change process in primary public schools. In addition, what sort of triggers and outcomes accompany change process will be learned. In short, this study will allow a comprehensive understanding of an organizational change process in primary public schools from the experiences of school members.

METHODOLOGY

In order to comprehend organizational change process in primary schools with regarding the perspectives of teachers and school principals in their natural setting, qualitative research is utilized for the study. For eliciting the meaning of lived interactions takes place during change process in primary schools for several individuals considering internal and external environments, and for understanding the essence of experiences about organizational change, *phenomenological approach* is internalized (Cresswell, 2006).

Qualitative research design is considerably lean on in-depth interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). By means of using interviewing, participant's perspectives, experiences, feelings and insights on the phenomenon of interest are arisen explicitly (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In order to uncover perspectives and experiences of teachers and school principals about change process in primary schools, one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research, interviewing is used as data collection method for this study. By means of using interview as data gathering method in this study, emic perspectives of principals and teachers are obtained and the meaning of organizational change process in primary schools is derived.

Participants

The sampling of the study depends on one of the strategy of *purposeful sampling* which is *criterion sampling*. Since the purpose is identifying and getting perspectives of the ones who had experience with change interventions, criterion sampling was effective in serving this purpose. The basic criterion for sampling strategy of the study is contingent on 'change of the school principals within one year'. With this criterion, a purposive sample of five school principals and five teachers working at public primary schools in Eskisehir with experiencing principal change accompanied by educational change in these schools participated in this phenomenological study. Participants of the research whom are school principals are all men while teachers are all women. Professional experiences of school principals vary from 8 years to 11 years while teacher participants' experiences range from 6 to 14 years. Of the teacher research participants, three of them are classroom teachers whereas the remaining two are mathematics teachers.

Data collection procedure

Participants of the study, five school principals and five teachers, are interviewed face to face through utilization of *semi-structured interviews*. Indeed, semi-structured interview is used due to being flexible and allowing new questions to rise during the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Patton, 1990). During the development of interview schedule, related literature was reviewed comprehensively to construct the framework and to prepare qualified interview questions tailoring change concepts. In fact, draft version of interview questions comprising 35 questions, including three warm-up questions for obtaining participants' demographic characteristics, are formulated. Draft version of interview questions then reduced to 18 questions through consulting a qualitative research specialist and two educational administration field specialists in order to elicit the evaluation to what extent the questions address the purpose, and what is the comprehensibility and feasibility of the prepared questions. The pilot study is conducted by interviewing with a school administrator and a teacher for acknowledging understandability and capability of the questions to be carried out. After the information gained from specialists and the feedback from pilot study, interview questions schedule is shaped with its latest version to be served for data gathering.

Interviews are conducted with the participants by considering Kvale's (1996) key strategies for qualitative research interviewing such as taking attention for the answers without deviating from the purpose, recording the interview with getting participants' consent, acquiring deep and rich information, not intervening the ideas of participants, obtaining long answers compared to directed questions. Recorded interviews are then transcribed and a table of 10 interviewees is drawn up with noting key issues and quotes from the transcripts for identifying the underlying themes in the data. In this context, school administrators are coded as *SA*, teachers are coded as *T* and each participant was given number.

Research data is analyzed through *content analysis*. In fact, content analysis requires deeply analysis of gathered data and provides opportunity for arising of themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the process of analysis, the views of participants are coded through creating general accounting scheme which is partway between provisional coding and inductive coding. By means of general accounting scheme guided, general categories are driven from the literature and codes are developed inductively (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Transcribed data are read by the researchers and codes are structured until categories are saturated. In order to ensure definitional clarity by check-coding, as well as reliability, both of the researchers coded data separately and codes are then reviewed. Intercoder reliability of the study is accounted via the formula of $\text{reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreement}}$. Eventually, 88% intercoder agreement is attained. Due to being above 70%, reliability of the data is assumed to be ensured (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes having correspondence with each other are taken to clump into broader sub-categories with leaving incongruent codes out of the analysis. In the following, content analysis is performed with organizing categories and generating themes of the study.

Internal validity (credibility) of the study is ensured through member checking by examining driven interpretations and conclusions with interviewees and keeping the duration of interviews long in order to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity (transferability) of the research, to what extent the findings can be transferred into another setting, is attained by means of thick descriptions while presenting the findings

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). On the other side, internal reliability (dependability/consistency) is achieved by dependability audit through inspecting the process and product of the research (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). External reliability (confirmability) is established by conformability audit with two experts through enabling independent examination of entire research process from data gathering to data analysis to determine to what extent the findings are not influenced by biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Hence, assessment of auditors is ensured whether or not the findings are grounded in the data, inferences are logical, biases are identified, and methods for trustworthiness are established.

FINDINGS

As a result of in-depth analysis of the data from 10 transcribed interviews with five school administrators and five teachers, five categories are organized by four dimensions common to change which are content, context, process and outcomes: *exposure for change* as regards localized change initiatives at schools and change initiatives of MONE, *internal environment* in terms of school principal leadership, attitudes towards change, demands of students; *external environment* regarding competitive pressures, government regulations, legislative and technological changes, standardized schools and demands of parents; and *process of change* in terms of initiation, implementation, post-implementation; *outcomes* as regards affective and behavioral reactions. Interview results are organized according to findings of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Categories and sub-categories emerged from data analysis

Categories	Sub-categories
1. <i>Content</i> -exposure for change	-change initiatives of MONE -localized change initiatives
2. <i>Context</i> -internal environment -external environment	-school principal leadership -demands of students -competition -governmental regulations -changing knowledge and technological changes -standardized schools -demands of parents
3. <i>Process</i> -process of change	-initiation *change initiators *decision for change *planning for change -implementation *communication *participation *management of change process -post-implementation *sustaining change -resistance for change
4. <i>Outcomes</i> -affective and behavioral reactions	-trust for change -openness to change -encourage change -satisfaction and happiness of parents, teachers and students

What kind of change took place?

Changes took place within five primary public schools are examined through considering the act of exposure for change within these schools in order to comprehend the content of change practices. The data gathered thorough interviewing school administrators and teachers revealed that change interventions were designed and introduced by both MONE and primary public schools themselves.

The results of the interviews with school principals and teachers showed that main topics that *change initiatives performed by MONE* are: curriculum change in primary public education, transition from teacher-centered education to student-centered education by adopting constructivist approach, e-school system, TEFBIS (Turkish Educational Finance and Education Expenses Information Management System), distribution of textbooks by MONE, abolishment of SBS (placement tests) in primary public schools, designation and replacement regulation of school principals like rotation of school administrators, changes in primary public school regulations, FATİH Project (Increasing Opportunities and Enhancement in Technology Movement Project), giving importance to values education by policy of ministry, IKS (Standards for Primary public Schools), electronic designation, electronic application for in-service training and replacement by score initiatives, total quality management and strategic action plan applications in the schools.

Of the teacher participants, T1 stated that “Curriculum has been changed, change in curriculum brought about changes in the courses. There was a teacher-centered education before, now education totally is student-centered, we solidify courses with activities and implementations.” About changes of MONE in the name of transparency, SA1 mentioned “Changes we need to put forward as transparency are e-school which introduces information areas to all stakeholders outside the school, TEFBIS which is finance information system”. On the other side, T1 sees abolishment of placement tests in primary public schools as one of the important change practices performed by MONE with the statement “There are placement tests. Beforehand, the exam was given 6th, 7th and 8th grades of primary public schools, next year it will be given only 8th grades.”

On the other hand, findings of the study revealed that major topics as *change practices adopted by primary public schools* can be grouped as change initiatives in physical structure of the school and change practices about education. Ergonomic school building establishment, change in school garden, corridors, stairs, external school door and boards, library establishment, insurance of the school, window repairing, installation of air-sterile devices, preparation of Atatürk (founder of Turkish Republic) corner, creation of more clean school, renewal of the laboratory, repairing of toilets, construction of playgrounds, providing security guard and ensuring personal student cabinets are the main change practices come forward in the physical structures of the school. Whereas, change initiatives related to education in the schools are use of information technologies in classes (E.g. smart boards, computer, projector, software program purchase, simulations, animations in lessons and high speed internet), introducing class system, use of white board, creation of classroom rules, getting photocopy machine and printer, providing special desks for classes, opening of preschool class, providing study rooms and change in school dresses.

When the views of participants are taken as regards change initiatives experienced in the schools, most of the participants believed that these change efforts are related to changes in internal and external physical structure of the school. About these changes in the *physical structure of the school*, one of the school principal SA3 stated that “We have

painted the school, hang on board, and bring liquid soap system to toilets.” and one of teachers T2 mentioned that T2 “Each year our classes are renewed in terms of technology, and new classes are constructed. Deficiencies of the classes are also completed. Student cabinets are constructed in primary public level classes; each student has his own cabinet now.”

In the context of *educational changes* in the schools, majority of the participants mentioned changing and utilized information technologies and they asserted that adapting these changes to classes is considered as change intervention. Related to educational changes, of the participants, SA1 places the following statement “We have started internet supported and projector supported education and training.” and SA2 points out “Our school utilizes information technologies; specially, placing smart boards in classes enables providing the education in an interactive environment.” As another example for educational changes that are experienced in the schools, SA1 perceives practiced change implementations like dressing of students and arranging class system in the school as educational change implementations.

What are external and internal environmental forces influencing change?

Internal and external environments of five primary public schools which change implementation occurred are examined by taking account the conditions surrounding changes for understanding the context of change practices. The interview results show that internal contextual issues and external forces come forward regarding conditions surrounding change practices in primary public schools.

In terms of *internal environmental issues*, core categories of data emerged from the analysis are leadership characteristics of school principal and demands of students. Interviewed school administrators and teachers are provided different views about school principal leadership. The results show that communication ability, convincing teachers about change, being determined about what to change and making last decision about change are main leadership features.

Of the school principals, SA2 takes care for the importance of communication skill by claiming “In the context of change, how you say something is more important than what you say. The way of your approach affects the person in front of you.” Besides, SA1 states the importance of convincing people for change by emphasizing that “I believe change then I try to convince people for change. I struggle, I never give up but I can face with some people who don’t believe. I try to persuade the personnel when they approach a project in a prejudicial way.” SA3 mentions the importance of school administrators being decisive in change process and preparing the infrastructure of change before initiation.

Participants add demands of students as internal forces influencing change in schools. Of the teachers, T3 stresses development of students as internal factor with the statement “Students are changing; they are in a continuous improvement.” On the other side, of the school administrators, SA1 believes that students are considered as internal factor for determining school’s change need with addressing “We take attention for student boards, student committees while identifying change needs.”

As regards *external forces*, competition, governmental regulations, changing knowledge and technological changes, standardized schools and demands of parents are main themes emerged from data. Of the school administrators, SA1 takes the attention to rapid changing world and competition by the statement “Competition, competition, competition.

While the world has been changing continuously, you cannot withdraw into your shell with being nonchalant. You absolutely need to keep up with this change.” SA2 emphasizes renewed regulations as external factor influencing change practices by saying that “We do our work through the boundaries of regulations. Therefore, we face with continuously changing situations. Of course it is necessary to be up-to-date. It is necessary to follow regulations.” The importance of technological changes is also pointed by SA4 through “Where technology is arriving at and how we move depending on this? We need to reconcile education technology with this era.” In addition to changing technology, SA2 mentions as well as changing knowledge by stating that “Rapid renewal of knowledge and technology. Especially knowledge is changing vigorously anymore; therefore, something you learned can move to different dimension ten minutes later.” School principal SA3 indicates standardization of schools and change demands of parents are the compelling factors for change with the expression of “Recently, schools have standards as regards education and training. You try to bring your educational standards near to other schools’ that are in other cities; then, you try to respond parents’ needs concerning change and education.” Parallel with the ideas of SA3, T5 points out that change practices are experienced considering parents’ demands with the statement of “In change interventions; firstly, needs of environment and needs of parent profile are talked about and discussed; then, change plans are done and innovations are performed depending on these.”

How do primary public schools undergo organizational change process?

Change implementations at schools are scrutinized under three stages: initiation, implementation and post-implementation. As regards *initiation stage*, participants mentioned initiators of change practices, process of decision making, and planning for change in schools.

When participants’ views are taken concerning change initiators, majority of the participants point school administrators as change initiators in their schools. Of the school administrators, SA4 denotes that “Change initiator in a school is exactly the leader of the school, school manager.” Likewise, other school administrators and teachers label school principals as change leaders at schools. Besides, school administrator SA3 also mentions other school members as change initiators with the statement “At first school principals of course, assistant school administrator, then teachers. Sometimes an attendant can be.”

Related to teachers’ and school principals’ thoughts about decision making process before change interventions, SA1 pointed out those thoughts of colleagues, students and parents are taken into consideration through participation into decision making process. Likewise, SA4 asserts that decision making process is initiated through exchange of ideas and consulting stakeholders’ thoughts by saying “During decision making process, we are willing to participate our colleagues to the process. May be our parents, MONE, universities, non-governmental organizations and industrial units. We pay attention for collaboration with organizations that directly or indirectly influence the school. We take their thoughts. Then, we pass to implication.”

School administrators and teachers also emphasize the importance of planning of change and task sharing during decision making process. Indeed, SA5 points out significance of short or long term change plan and determining individuals having roles in change process with his expressions “While deciding for change, you also do planning; short term or long term. Afterwards, you designate roles in change process; you identify the individ-

uals with their roles.” Similarly, T5 declares planning for change process with the expression that “Issues that will go over change is negotiated. Depending on this negotiation, change plans are done and innovations are implemented.” Other from these, sustainability and economy of change, keeping up with developing technology are considered as important factors for decision for change by school principals.

In terms of *implementation stage*, foremost themes resulted from interviews with teachers and school administrators are communication, participation and management of change process. In the implementation process of change practices, participants mention the importance of communication. Specifically, communication of change is achieved through hanging an official document on the board or talking with people. On the other side, SA4 states that the administrator starts communication process of change and interviews with teachers. SA1 denotes taking care of using common mind with teachers in change process. Of the teachers, T1 mentions performed interviews by school principals with teachers concerning change implementations, sharing of thoughts and positive communication between each other.

Of the participants, T2 mentions the importance of participation to change practices during implementation stage through teachers’ endeavors and supports. Similarly, SA2 also states that school administrator should plan and control change process by saying “It is necessary to explain what is changing and its contributions to our school. Moreover, change is not performed without planning. Change is not a phenomenon performed randomly and developed spontaneously. Therefore, you need to control and be in charge of the process.” Related to management of change process during implementation stage, T4 denotes coordination of process and reporting as controlling by the statement of “After division of work for change intervention, reports are demanded for some of the works and meetings are done. Who fulfills his work and to what extent he does are controlled.”

As regards *post-implementation step* during change process, the findings of the study highlight the theme of sustainability of change. When the views of teachers and school principals about sustainability of change interventions are investigated, similar thoughts between teachers and school administrators stand out. Of the school principals, SA2 emphasizes that “How we sustain change? Actually, established system and effective management of the process are already preserving itself. There is no need for you to extra effort. It is already going spontaneously.” Moreover, T5 focuses that if the implementation phase is overcome, there will be no problem while sustaining change. Likewise, school administrators, SA1 and SA3, also take the attention for owning change and presenting determinism in sustainability of change interventions.

What are the reactions towards change initiatives?

The outcomes of change interventions can be considered as affective and behavioral reactions towards change. The interview results showed that teachers exhibit negative attitudes towards change at first, they exhibit *resistance for change* and they do not immediately accept change due to being afraid; however, if they *trust for change* with its benefits, they accept change interventions. Moreover, school administrators take the importance of trust for change, being excited and fostering enthusiasm for change whereas teachers specified that they generally have positive attitudes towards change, even though some of them are not warm to changes, they support experienced change interventions and indicated that

their school principals are *open to change* and *encourage change practices* in the schools. Of the school principals, SA3 focuses on resistance for change at the beginning of change attempts and senior teachers' resistance for change practices in the school by stating that "During change intervention, you firstly face with resistance within the organizations since individuals do not give up their old habits. Even though you formed or implemented your own rules based on legislations and laws, you faced with resistance." and "If you have senior teachers in your school, you perform change practices more difficult."

When the participants are asked to evaluate the results of change practices in their schools, school principals and teachers stated that change interventions create *satisfaction and happiness of parents, teachers and students*. Of the school principals, SA4 takes the attention of parent and student satisfaction "From these changes, especially parents and students are very pleased. Parents are very satisfied and they said that the school principal should come here years ago. Indeed, they are very happy and parent support is very much." Likewise, SA2 mentions the facilitation of teachers' work and their pleasure through change interventions with the expression of "Our colleagues are so pleased from change practices. Indeed, they come to my room and present their appreciations."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Change implementations at public primary schools in Turkey are analyzed depending on four research themes common to all change efforts by considering the interviews with school principals and teachers because congruence between content, context, process and outcomes of change determines the success of change efforts (Damanpour, 1991).

In terms of content of change in schools, interview results showed that change implementations are under the monopoly of MONE and local primary schools. Specifically, MONE performed such change implementations within public primary schools: educational changes such as curriculum change in primary education, transition from teacher-centered education to student-centered education with embracing constructivist approach, values education by policy of ministry, distribution of textbooks by MONE, division of books into textbooks and workbook, abolishment of SBS (placement tests) in primary schools, system in reading-writing-learning (hand writing), and changes in regulations and offered services influencing schools like primary school regulations, e-school system, TEFBIS (Turkish Educational Finance and Education Expenses Information Management System), designation and replacement regulation of school principals like rotation implementation for school administrators, FATİH Project (Increasing Opportunities and Enhancement in Technology Movement Project), IKS (Standards for Primary Schools), electronic designation, electronic application for in-service training, new total quality management and strategic action plan implementations. These changes fulfilled by MONE can be considered as radical changes due to restructuring of Turkish Education System by adopting new component systems (Schermerhorn et al., 1994). In fact, these change practices are intense and encompassing education system of primary schools. These organizational changes are beyond the primary schools so that organizational change practices are initiated by one of the main external force, MONE, to come up with changes in competitive environment, government regulations and technological developments. Since practices of MONE deeply alter entire education system as regards mission, culture and strategic direction, these change implementations can be seen as transformational rather than being transactional

(Burke & Litwin, 1992). Due to touching core of the school organizations by transformation of schools with being revolutionary, these radical changes can be seen as second-order changes (Levy & Merry, 1986). On the other side, as individualized schools, public primary schools carry out changes peculiar to their schools like change initiatives in physical structure of their school, change practices about education and change implementations outside their school. These changes generally comprise school building repairing in different areas and espousing information technologies in classes for educational development by means of purchasing new technologies. These changes can be accounted as incremental changes since these initiatives enhance existing structure of schools being equipped with new products and new systems (Schermerhorn et al., 1994). Actually, these incremental changes are designed to improve efficiency in school, not inducing deep structure of educational organizations. Since these changes are short term practices at primary schools, these alterations can be accepted as transactional (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Due to being small-scale and less-dramatic changes with enhancing efficiency within the organization, these transactional changes in primary schools can also be considered as first-order changes (Levy & Merry, 1986).

As regards context of organizational change at primary schools, internal and external forces affecting change need to be mentioned since these factors shape environment of the organizations (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Finstad, 1998). In that sense, educational organizations are said to be open systems interacting with other systems and outside their environment. As being open systems, structures and activities of the schools are influenced by their external environment. Actually, there are countless variables potentially influencing whether a change program is started in schools and changes get initiated from many different sources and for many reasons (Fullan, 2007). Social, political, economic, technological and demographic propensities of external environment affect school organizations (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In this study, interviews with school administrators and teachers revealed that external contextual factors and internal environmental forces influence primary schools towards change interventions. In fact, school principal's leadership characteristics and demands of students are emerged factors underlining internal environment of the primary schools. In terms of leadership characteristics of school principal, communication ability, convincing teachers about change, being determined what to change and making last decision for change are the basic contextual factors that have important roles in organizational change process. Whereas results revealed that competition in the world, renewed regulations of the government, changing knowledge and technological changes, standardization of schools, demands of parents are identified as external forces driving primary schools towards change. That is, change agents external to the schools districts like regional, state or national facilitators play an important role in initiating change projects (Fullan, 2007). In that sense, the findings are parallel with the related literature. Specifically, external context factors that is profoundly affect organizational change can be determined as governmental regulations (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991), legislative and technological changes (Haveman, 1992), and competitive pressures (Meyer et al., 1990), standardized schools and demands of parents. Similarly, Töremen (2002) also asserted the same conclusions about major reasons leading school change as external pressures; such as changing regulations and legislations, crises and conflicts and ineffective communication. When internal and external factors influencing change are considered as a whole, school principals as change leaders are need to take attention these issues in order to perform

successful change interventions at their schools. Still other internal and external forces for change at primary schools are perceived as demands of students and parents. However, it is obvious that no demands come from teachers even though they are the actors of change whom put change initiatives into practice in the schools. The reasons behind why change demands do not come from teachers may stem from teachers' afraid of change, not undertaking responsibility and not receiving overload in the schools.

At the beginning of this change process, findings of the study concluded that teachers *resist for change* due to being afraid of change initiatives; however, school principals' being determined and using effective communication ability and convincing teachers about change lead to breaking down teachers' resistance for change. At this point, teachers' performed resistance for change can be accepted as *blind resistance* and *political resistance* since teachers are afraid of change with being prejudiced at first and they feel that their stakes are in danger (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989). If favorable returns of change interventions are considered, blind and political resistance of teachers against change initiatives without scrutinizing the content of change and its benefits, with the anxieties of not sustaining the old habits and corruption in their orders, may influence efficiency and development of schools negatively. This situation shows that teachers are almost positive about change and participated in different school development projects. Therefore, it is concluded that teacher advocacy of change is adopted well and change ideas are supported by teachers (Fullan, 2007). In case of this situation, school principals have important roles. School administrators' behaviors as being determined and persuading teachers by effective communication to perform change interventions present ways for coping with change (Caruth, Middlebrook & Rachel, 1985). In addition, school principals are seen as *open to change* with being willing to support change even though they are exposed to MONE's change practices or implement their unique change initiatives for their schools. At the same time, school principals form infrastructure for change practices that will provide benefit for the school and they get teachers to make them ready for change initiatives. For making teachers ready for change, school principals should give information for change and benefits of change are mentioned by them, and uncertainty stems from change is reduced (Burke, 2008, Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). In the end, findings of the study concluded that when teachers develop trust for their school principal, their stress and uncertainty across change interventions are reduced which is the basis in the construction of change initiatives (Gomez & Rosen, 2001; Martin, 1998).

The findings of research indicated that change process at primary schools can be investigated under three stages: initiation, implementation and post-implementation. In initiation stage, participants of the study point out school principals and MONE as change initiators. In fact, school principals are considered as decision makers in schools as regards determining what to change in schools. However, teachers do not demand for change initiatives and they may resist on change practices at first. Therefore, school principals take teachers' thought and get them involved into decision making process of change interventions. Furthermore, factors like communication, participation and management of change process are essentials for successful implementation of change initiatives. For this sense, it is clear that participation and communication within an open environment contribute to progress of exploring ideas, encourage support for change and create a sense of shared influence. Understanding of change interventions (Glew, O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Van Fleet, 1995), participation to change process and communication are critical factors for effective

change process (Mento, Jones & Dirndorfer, 2010; Walker, Armenakis & Bernerth, 2007). Actually, communication during change process contributes to understanding of change profoundly and destroys resistance caused by uncertainty and confusion (Mento et al., 2010). Moreover, information sharing and communication facilitate change processes and decrease the feelings about uncertainty by influencing openness of individuals for change interventions (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). After the implementation of change practices in primary schools even imposed by MONE or performed by school principals, satisfaction from the results of changes stands out from teachers, school principals, parents and students, and maintaining of implemented changes achieved through owning, following and controlling. These three stages are also compatible with Lewin's three steps of change process: unfreezing, changing and refreezing (1947). More specifically, school principals and MONE initiate change implementations in schools through emphasizing the need for change compelled by internal and external environment when the first step unfreezing is considered. In fact, disconfirmation and anxiety are eroded by providing information by school administrators. In the second step, change practices imposed by school principals or MONE are implemented to reach a desired state. In refreezing step, desired change is ensured and sustainability of change is maintained. On the other hand, the stages revealed in the study are also getting along well with the phases in Fullan's change model: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome (Fullan, 1982, 2007). In initiation phase, a decision to adopt a change is taken by MONE or localized change initiatives. Then, an idea or set of activities influencing education directly or indirectly are put into the practice in implementation stage. Continuation phase in the model is achieved by owning change and presenting determinism for sustainability of change interventions.

The changes at primary schools can be also described by emphasizing the theoretical framework behind change process when Van de Ven and Poole's (1995) process theories of organizational development and change. Of the four typology of change, change interventions in primary schools depend on *teleological* and *evolutionary theory*. In essence, teleological theory stems from goal setting and strategic planning (Chakravarthy & Lorange, 1991). Actually, change practices are resulted from intentional decision to change driven from school principals and MONE. At this point, it is obvious that change initiatives are aroused from purposeful and adaptive acts (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The school principals or MONE determine the direction and details of change practices in school through setting goals and purposeful cooperation with teachers and students. Specifically, goals related to educational matters and school structure are formulated and then change practices are implemented and evaluated. This situation is clearly mentioned in strategic planning reports of primary schools. In fact, schools envision end state of the development before implementation of change practices, and goals are set explicitly. In that sense, schools establish their organizational mission statement with creating their vision, plan their strategies and list their goals. All these concepts are accepted as the applications of teleological theory (Burke, 2008). On the other side, teachers in the study referred students as an important internal factor of change by stating that student were changing in a continuous improvement. Moreover, principals stress that increased competition is one of the major external forces of change in schools. Emphasizing competition and changing environment clearly refer to evolutionary theory of change that is adopted in schools.

With the light of findings there may be some suggestions for schools and Ministry of National Education in order to get successful change implementations. Firstly, if change

project is initiated from top to down, ministries should inform both school principals and teachers working at primary schools concerning the benefits ,possible results and process of changes before initiating radical change implementations. In fact, knowledge about why of change and its moral purpose behind change implementation; e.g. improving society, should be given. The capacity of the schools should also be built through increasing the collective power in school by developing new knowledge, skill and competencies (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005). Besides, school principals' authority and responsibilities as change leaders should be checked out again for the implementation of localized change interventions at schools. In this way, authorities of school principals can be increased. In addition, it is obvious that teachers and students are suffered from change implementations utilized by the ministry. Therefore, the ministry should consider views of school principals, teachers, students and parents about implemented change practices, and necessary improvements and applications should be carried out. School principals also should participate teachers in change decisions, share information related to change and encourage teachers for change to eliminate negative attitudes towards change. Hence, coherence making should be fostered by the school principals for increasing change knowledge so that culture for learning and change is built Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005).

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