Chapter 6

New Challenge of School Principals: Leading the Culture of “Living Together”

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ABSTRACT

Increasing diversity in schools has made the culture of living together an important issue in schools and forces education, schools, and school administrations to transform. The roles, responsibilities, and tasks of school principals are also transforming. However, the culture of living together does not fully coincide with the values of the nation-state. Laws of nation states, social understanding, and beliefs and values of school principals create significant obstacles for school principals who are expected to lead the culture of living together. On the other hand, school principals-preparing programs keep their traditional approach, are theory-oriented, and lack appropriate educational strategies. This new challenge to school principals needs to be understood, and the preparing of aspiring and incumbent school principals needs to be reconsidered in this new framework.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of living together has become a phenomenon that concerns almost all segments of society and all geographies today. Schools are one of the institutions where the culture of living together (CLT) has been accepted as one of the priority issues. At all levels of educational institutions from kindergarten to higher education,
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school principals and teachers establish the basic networks of the phenomenon within the framework of equality and integration concepts. The solution of this painful problem is the school principals who will lead CLT.

The role of school principals has been generally defined as “instructional leadership” (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2012). However, the role of leading the culture of “living together” has been added as a new role and responsibility of school principals in schools in which ever-increasing diversity is observed (Johnson, Møller, Ottesen, Pashiardis, Savvides & Vedøy, 2011; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2010). The effective implementation of this new leadership role by school principals is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of social peace as well as for the upbringing of children and young people who are often physically, emotionally, and mentally disadvantaged in different social segments (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2004).

Although CLT has a long history (Johnson & Pak, 2019; Kalin, 2016), the concepts of culture-sensitive schools and education came to the agenda in the last quarter of the 20th century and started to be discussed as an important problem of the 21st century. Educational institutions as well as policy-makers do not seem to have acquired sufficient knowledge of leadership approaches that focus on CLT. It is difficult to say that the legal basis that defines the limits of the authority and responsibility areas of school principals is arranged in a way to facilitate the leadership of CLT (Billot, 2008; Ylimaki, & Brunderman, 2019).

School principals have serious deficiencies in terms of their leadership competencies of CLT. Professional development programs that focus on competencies which enable school principals to lead a CLT are very limited. Although pre-service school principal training programs have a history of close to two centuries in both national and international perspectives, these programs are still considered as far from raising CLT. These programs have not been able to put forward common approaches on how to prepare school principals, content, and methods of training in the context of CLT (Young, Madsen & Young, 2010; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2004; Johnson, et al., 2011; Aslanargun, 2007; Biafora & Ansalone, 2008).

In this chapter, the pre-service and in-service professional development of school principals who are expected to lead CLT will be discussed. The concepts of multiculturalism, living together, multicultural education and school will be analyzed in the context of nation state and modernism in order to clarify the boundaries of the topic. Then, school leadership, the individual, institutional and social obstacles, the dimensions, the necessary competencies of leadership of CLT, as well as the scope and strategies of professional development programs in which these competencies will be gained will be emphasized in terms of leadership in CLT.
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