

Teachers' Opinions about Power Sources in Schools*

Senay Sezgin Nartgun

A.I.B.Ü., Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Bolu, Turkey
E-mail: szbn@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT Administrators, in order to be effective to realize the organizational goals, should have power to influence them. Power is divided into two in itself as formal and informal power. These may cause either the maintenance or disappearance of organizations, and during this process it is mainly the employees and secondly the stakeholders who are affected. When schools are considered as organizations, the administrators themselves, teachers, students, parents, and other related people are either positively or negatively affected by the existence of this power. Within this framework, the aim of this study is to investigate teachers' opinions about power sources in schools. To achieve this purpose a case study model was used, a sample from the study was selected, and an appropriate sampling model was used. The study group consisted of 31 teachers, who participated in the study voluntarily. Some of the findings of the study reveal that teachers mostly consider school principals as a formal power and parents as an informal power, and they believe that parents have an influence on the school administration. They also believe that the relationship between the informal power and formal power is influenced when the interests of both sides are concerned.

INTRODUCTION

School administrators are primarily responsible for the order and successful management of the operations and the realization of organizational goals. Administrators need power to carry out their responsibilities and they need power sources in order to be powerful. While power characterizes the skill of winning a political war and interpersonal interaction, it changes according to time and individuals (Ozkalp and Kirel 2001; Krackhardt 1990). Power is defined as the ability to have someone do something, to ask for something, to control something, or to lead someone about how to handle things, as well as being a tool that leads to goals (Bursalioglu 2002; Demir 2014; Finkelstein 1992; Greenberg and Baron 1993; Rosefielde 2002; Simsek 2002). Power is regarded as the ability to change behaviors and the direction of events, to overcome resistance, and to convince people to act in a manner that they would not normally consider (Pfeffer 1992: 30). This persuasion may be practiced via official or unofficial power depending on who performs the behavior. Official power is essentially associated with the position held by administrators (Basaran 1992; Simsek 2001; cited in Deniz and Colak 2008; Meydan and Polat 2010). Administrators holding posts are naturally accepted as having authority (Kocel 2007; cited in Meydan and Polat 2010). Although the concepts of power and authority seem closely related, they

are not the same. While authority is the basis of official control for administrators, teachers and students, the source of control is the official control attributed to the position one holds or the tasks one manages, but it is not related to the identity of the person who plays that role. Since seniors represent authority in organizations, they are the ones who primarily have legal power. Subordinates have official or unofficial power and responsibilities in the organization. They utilize this power and authority to obtain more power and authority (Acikalin 1993). Subordinates feel inclined to follow orders and directives from the upper tiers. Administrators, teachers, and students in schools present accommodating behaviors that represent acceptance of the official authority that exists in the school (Hoy and Miskel 1998). In this context, authority is the official aspect of power that is supported by official and formal sanctions. The power of administrators due to their positions in affecting the behaviors of subordinates is called official power in the organizational hierarchy (Ada 2013; Deniz and Colak 2008).

The related literature (Bakan and Buyukmese 2010; Basaran and Duygulu 2014; Erdogan 1997; Erkutlu 2003; Fiol 1991; Johnson and Scollay 2001) highlights the classifications of Weber (1947), Dahl (1957), French-Raven (1968), Etzioni (1975), and Yukl (1989) on power sources. French-Raven's five forms of power are "legitimate, reward, expert, referent, and coercive" (Hoy

and Miskel 1998), whereas Etzioni cites power sources as coercive (physical), remunerative, and normative (symbolic) power, and Yukl classifies them as individual and organizational power sources (Basaran and Duygulu 2014). Power sources are also defined in the literature as official power, official authority (Peabody 1962; Bakau-Scott 1962), bureaucratic authority (Weber 1947), reward-official power (French-Raven 1968), and the system of authority (Mintzberg 1983), whereas unofficial power is defined as coercive power (French-Raven 1968, cited in Hoy and Miskel 1998). Although it is not possible to observe all of these power sources in state schools due to hierarchical structuring and the centralized system, it is possible to see them in private schools. While official power sources in schools are regarded as the principal and assistant principals, higher level educational administrators are official power sources as well. On the other hand, it is a known fact that many groups or individuals may have an impact on the decisions and operations of schools. Therefore, the fact that this study aims to present the reasons underlying the power sources by identifying the existing and perceived power sources in schools points to its significance. Within this framework, this study aims to investigate teachers' opinions about power sources in schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a "case study" research model, which is a qualitative research design. A convenience sampling model was used to identify the working group of the study. The convenience sampling model was selected since it is related to conditions (time, money, location, availability of sites and respondents) (Merriam 1998). The working group of the study consisted of 31 teachers (11 high school teachers, 10 secondary school teachers, and 10 primary school teachers) who participated in the study voluntarily. The "semi-structured interview form" developed by the researcher was used in the study in order to collect the data. The interview form prepared by reviewing the related literature was presented to six instructors in the field of Educational Sciences, and it was modified based on these views before the pilot implementation was carried out. The data obtained from the implementation were checked for accuracy by comparing them with the data found in the literature. Later,

the finalized form was implemented on the working group. The data utilized in this study were obtained from the voluntary teachers who were interviewed in the spring term of the 2014-2015 academic year. The interview format was composed of five questions geared to collecting teachers' views on the sources of power in schools.

1. In your opinion, who are the individuals with power in your school?
2. In your opinion, who are the individuals with unofficial power in your school? Why do you think they have this type of power?
3. What can you say about the relationships between official and unofficial power?
4. What is the distribution of power in your school?
5. Can you explain the impact of this power on you?

The researcher took notes during the interviews held with the respondents. The notes were later converted to text by the researcher. The texts were coded according to the questions asked in the interview. These codes were utilized in content analysis. The coding was separately undertaken by the researcher and an expert in the field, and later the results were compared. Additionally, a triangulation method was used to test the validity and reliability (Yildirim and Simsek 2006). As indicated by Yildirim and Simsek (2006), the texts were converted into matrixes suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) in order to ensure detailed, clear, and comprehensible data processing and analysis process. Unnecessary information was eliminated during the conversion of the data into the matrix and only the core information was used. The number of times the data were used in the matrix was identified. Repeatedly used data were presented as common views and the data not repeated by the respondents were regarded as findings since they were accepted as unique to the members of the interview group. Since the respondents were informed that their names were going to be kept confidential during the study, they were coded by the use of numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.) and by type of employment (Primary School Teacher: PT).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section regards the questions as sub-problems and presents the findings based on this approach:

According to Table 1, the primary, secondary, and high school teachers participating in the study regarded school principals and assistant principals as the individuals with the most power in schools since the power and authority of school administrators are based on their positions, and they use this power over the others as sanctions (Hoy and Williams 1971; Hoy and Rees 1974, cited in Hoy and Miskel 1998; Cobanoglu and Gokalp 2015; Tavares 2015; Titrek and Zafer 2009). Ugurlu and Demir (2016) emphasized in their research "... A school principal has the power equivalent to the power of the king in a chess game". Also in Table 1, the teachers cited others with power as being the governor/deputy governor, the Director of Provincial National Education/Assistant Director of Provincial National Education, educational inspectors, senior teachers, unions, heads of parent-teacher associations, parents, and religious and political groups. Citing the centralized structure as a reason for these beliefs would not be incorrect. In this context, Aypay (2015) also stated that the first power source is information; the second power source is allies with power (Director of Provincial National Education, school principals etc.), and the third is organizational structure (for instance, ed-

ucational inspectors). This view is consistent with the current finding of this study.

According to Table 2, while high school teachers regarded assistant principals, senior teachers, and parents as the sources of unofficial power, secondary school teachers regarded parents, representatives of political parties, and private organizations/individuals who provide financial resources to schools as the sources of unofficial power. Primary school teachers regarded parents as the holders of unofficial power in schools. The reasons underlying these beliefs were cited as using the power attained from official power as they see fit, the impressionability of administrators' thoughts and behaviors directly by assistant administrators, the personal characteristics they possess, relationships based on friendship, a lack of financial resources in the school, and the group mindset.

Ada's (2013) study also stated that the individuals working in the same organization use their power based on their status. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the administrators who use this power should understand society and that they need the support of social strata other than teachers, students, and parents with whom they already have daily communication

Table 1: Individuals with power at schools based on teacher's views

<i>Position</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>People with power in schools</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>High School Teachers</i>	11	Governor/ Deputy Governor	2
		Director of Provincial National Education/Assistant Director of Provincial National Education	4
		School Principals/ Assistant Principals	11
		Unions	1
		Parents	1
		Senior Teachers	2
		Educational Inspectors	1
		Religious and Political Groups	1
		Governor/ Deputy Governor	4
		Director of Provincial National Education/Assistant Director of Provincial National Education	5
<i>Secondary School Teachers</i>	10	School Principals	8
		Assistant Principals	6
		Teachers	1
		Governor/ Deputy Governor	2
		Director of Provincial National Education/Assistant Director of Provincial National Education	2
<i>Primary School Teachers</i>	10	Director of District National Education/Assistant Director of District National Education	1
		Inspectors	1
		School Principals	10
		Assistant Principals	8
		Teachers	2
		Parents	1
		Heads of Parent-Teacher Association	1

Table 2: Individuals with unofficial power in schools based on teachers' views and the reasons for those beliefs

<i>Position</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Individuals with unofficial power in schools</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Why do they have this kind of power?</i>
<i>High School Teachers</i>	11	Upper-tier Administrators	1	
		Principal	1	They use the power in their hands as they see fit
		Assistant Principals	4	They can affect the principals directly due to their personal characteristics
		Senior Teachers	4	Since they work in the same school for many years
		Parents	4	Due to past connections and friendships
				They have political power
				Through acquaintances
<i>Secondary School Teachers</i>	10			They are the fundamental cornerstones of schools, they tend to pressurize teachers and administrators based on anxiety related to their children
		Tradesmen in the	1	Since they meet the financial needs of the school
				Tradesmen in small districts have a voice in district management, therefore they are also effective in the schools
		Vocational Teachers/ Chief Workshop Managers	2	They are engaged in one-on-one interaction with students
				They are the most effective individuals in job training and ensuring discipline among students
		Representatives of Political Parties	3	The fact that they regard themselves as above the school
				They believe that they are superior to teachers
<i>Primary School Teachers</i>	10			The fact that official or unofficial powers have excessive voices in schools
		School Principals/ Assistant Principals	2	Since they are administrators
				Since they have administrative power
		Education Unions	2	The fact that unions with a higher number of members in schools have greater influence
		Parents	4	Since they are effective in assignments based on the support received from the political power
				Based on the existing system
				Since they believe that the school functions only for their own benefit
<i>Primary School Teachers</i>	10			Since they make up an important part of the training and education process
				Intervening in all steps of education with the impact of the press (grade notes...)
		Private Organizations/Individuals who provide financial resources for schools	3	Due to the economic power they possess
				The fact that they meet the financial needs of the school
		Teachers	7	Parent-Teacher Associations
				Authority provided by legislation
		Parents	5	Having the same views as the principals
<i>Primary School Teachers</i>	10			Acting with a group/group mindset
				Having dominant characters
				Being in the same union as the principal
				Due to financial resources
				Due to their professions
		Village Imams	1	Parents' occupations
		School bus drivers	1	The fact that they have an immense impact on the villagers
<i>Primary School Teachers</i>	10	Janitors	2	The fact that there is no alternative to these people
				They whistleblow about the staff to ingratiate themselves to the principal.
				The fact that janitors try to act like the principal in organizations with weak administration

and contact (Aypay 2015). The type of mutual communication with these groups may affect the utilized and perceived power. Also, when school principals are more supportive than authoritarian, the organization and staff are believed to be more successful (Hoy and Miskel 1998). One important reason why unofficial power sources are effective in school management is the need for support from parents, tradesmen, and supporters due to a lack of financial resources. One of the most significant ways of removing these sorts of impact from schools is through increasing the financial opportunities provided for schools. When financial resources are not provided, it is inevitable for school administrators to feel the impact of these power sources.

According to Table 3, while the high school teachers regarded the relationships between official and unofficial power as mutually supportive, they believe these relationships are vastly variable. In addition, the teachers believed that working alongside each other for many years created a relationship of trust. The secondary school teachers believed that the relationship between these two types of power was moderate and positive, but conflicts arose from time to time. The primary school teachers explained this relationship in the following statement: "While official power can exist on its own, unofficial

power bases its existence on unofficial power" and emphasized the fact that official power was sometimes under the influence of unofficial power. Additionally, there were teachers from both secondary schools and primary schools who believed that unofficial power had no impact on official power. In his classification, Etzioni (1975; cited in Erkutlu 2003) states that power stems from three sources, which are coercive, remunerative, and normative power. According to this classification, staff may choose to act to think like their administrators in order to be a part of the organization and to be rewarded (Erkutlu 2003). Carzo and Yanouzas (1967, cited in Erkutlu 2003) mentions that members of an organization attempt to increase their power by forming coalitions and groups or by using the position of an individual in the organization and his/her proximity to the centers of decision making. When unofficial power is accurately utilized in schools, it can be thought of as an auxiliary power that supports the official power.

According to Table 4, distribution power was mostly centered on official power. PT 25 expressed the following views in explaining the distribution of power that "there is a school principal who is attempting to possess all the power and how he/she will distribute the power is completely dependent on his/her mood", whereas

Table 3: Relationships between official and unofficial powers in schools based on teachers' views

	<i>Relationships between official and unofficial powers</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>High School</i>	The individuals in schools with official and unofficial power are the same	1
	Sometimes the official power has to give in to unofficial power	2
	Teachers' authority is undermined due to parental pressure and their impact	1
	Unofficial power supports the official power	2
	Working together for many years creates relationships based on trust	1
	Balance of power is variable, it can be weak on one day although it was fine the previous day	1
<i>Secondary School</i>	Moderate and positive relationship	2
	Relationships based on benefits and self interest	1
	If the impact of unofficial power decreases, school management will be more effective	1
	Sometimes there are conflicts	2
<i>Primary School</i>	Unofficial power has no impact on official power	1
	Individuals who have official power sometimes hand it over to individuals with unofficial power	1
	While official power can exist on its own, unofficial power bases its existence on unofficial power	1
	Looking for each others' weak points creates mistrust	1
	Generally good; individuals with official power do not confront others with unofficial power	3
	Generally good; they believe that their authority may be harmed (from negative relationships)	1
	Unofficial power does not have any impact on official power	2

Table 4: Distribution of power in schools based on teachers' views

	<i>Distribution of power</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>High School</i>	It is primarily centered on official power	3
	Attempts are made to suppress unofficial power	1
	It is in the form of authority sharing between administrators and teachers	1
	Seniority in teachers affects the power balance	1
	While teachers and administrators are busy with routine tasks, distribution of power consists only of the director of district national education	2
	It changes according to the existing situation, economic expectations bring parents to the forefront	1
	Inspectors are regarded as the power in all issues	1
	Administrators use their power to the fullest extent	2
	Everyone undertakes the responsibilities given to them, equal distribution	2
<i>Secondary School</i>	It is primarily centered on official power	9
	It is in the hands of the teachers	4
	Economic expectations bring parents to the forefront	4
	I have no information regarding this issue	1
<i>Primary School</i>	It is primarily centered on official power	8
	Teachers have the power	7

PT 27 said that “although it looks like the real power lies with the principal and the assistant principal, a few female and male teachers manage the administers themselves”. According to Mossholder and Kemery (1998, cited in Meydan and Polat 2010), power depends on the hierarchical position in the organization independent of the personality of the administrator. On the other hand, not only principals and assistant

principals, but also the teachers have power due to factors such as having more responsibilities than authority, period of employment in a certain school, and their seniority.

Teachers mostly regarded the impact of power over staff as negative. They believed that this negative impact caused decreases in in-class and out-of-class performances. Teachers who believed the impact to be positive stated that they

Table 5: Impact of power on staff based on teachers' views

<i>Type of school</i>		<i>Impact of power on staff</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>High School</i>	Positive	Tasks are managed easily	3
		Attempts are made to get on well with the administration so as not to experience problems	
		There are no problems if you are not for or against unofficial power	
	Negative	Staff will feel alone and under pressure when there are differences of opinion	8
		You can feel alone if you are not part of any group	
		They even interfere with the grades given to students	
<i>Secondary School</i>	No impact	Distribution of tasks is not balanced	1
	Positive	It has no impact	2
		Valuing the personnel	
	Negative	Flexible implementation of rules by the school administration	5
		It can be used as a mobbing tool	
		Teachers' in-class performances are affected	
<i>Primary School</i>	No impact	Principals state what needs to be done, teachers do it diligently	2
		Discrimination between teachers in terms of seniority and gender	
		It kills the enthusiasm for work, it is dispiriting	
	Positive	It has no impact	1
	Negative	It ensures undertaking of tasks in a timely manner	6
		Ordering teachers	
		Speaking harshly to teachers	
		Obligation to form good relationships with people in power	
		Decreases in performance	
		Lack of rewards for achievements	

felt noticed and that tasks were undertaken regularly (Table 5). PT 14 stated that "the fact that school principals overuse their power, i.e. holding all the power in their hands, results in slowing down in tasks to the point of stopping all functions". According to Ozdayi's (2001) research results, administrators also have problems since they cannot use their initiative, and that affects the timely performance of tasks. Increased levels of centralized management in education may often cause difficulties in implementing these higher level decisions by the administrators. In this context, using power over staff in positive ways may improve the performances of the school, thus increasing its achievements.

CONCLUSION

Whether public or private, organizations are required to use human and material resources in the most productive manner in order to survive, be successful, maintain their existence despite heavy competition in the sector, and outclass their competitors. Human and material resources seriously affect the power balance in an organization. Administrators undertake their tasks by using both official and unofficial power sources and should not ignore other factors that also bring success. Individuals with administrative positions in schools which are public organizations range widely from governors to assistant principals. According to the results of this study, teachers regarded governors, deputy governors, directors of provincial national education, assistant directors of provincial national education, school principals, assistant school principals, educational inspectors, senior teachers, unions, heads of parent-teacher associations, and religious and political groups as the sources of power.

Teachers regarded upper-tier administrators, school principals, assistant school principals, senior teachers, unions, representatives of political parties, heads of parent-teacher associations, parents, private organizations/individuals who provide financial resources for schools, district tradesmen, village imams, janitors, and school bus drivers as individuals with unofficial power. They believe that these individuals with power use the authority they receive from official power as they like, that assistant principals might directly affect the thoughts and behaviors of the administrators, and factors such as personal characteristics, relationships based on

friendship, lack of financial resources at school, and the group mindset cause this type of power.

According to the teachers, although the relationships between official and unofficial power are supportive and sometimes based on benefits and interest, they are also variable and official power is sometimes affected by and could give into unofficial power. On the other hand, there are some teachers who believe that unofficial power has no impact on official power.

Based on the teachers' views, the distribution of power is mainly centered on official power. The impact of power over staff is generally regarded to be negative. The teachers believe that this negative impact causes in-class and out-of-class performances to deteriorate. The teachers who believe the impact to be positive stated that they felt noticed and that tasks were undertaken in a timely fashion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The significance of unofficial power should not be avoided but it should not be allowed to surpass official power.
2. Instead of using official power as a pressure tool, they need to use it for the development of teachers and their organizations.

NOTE

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