

## Excellent Leadership Theory in Education<sup>1</sup>

Erkan Kiral

### Abstract

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, policymakers and educators agree that improving the quality of K-12 education requires effective leadership practices and collaborative efforts. Particularly, research has shown that a leadership approach that focuses on a continuous improvement can achieve impressive results. Successful leaders empower teachers to be the best they can be in their own classrooms and they able to extend their leadership to others so every faculty can lead positive changes. Even though there are many effective school leaders who show excellent leadership behaviors for ongoing student achievement, these leadership practices and their leadership approaches have not been empirically or theoretically conceptualized. This study claims that employing a concept of “Excellent Leadership of School Administrators” as a new leadership approach may potentially be used to increase K-12 student achievement through continuous improvement and systemic partnership. This literature review and conceptual study is designed to fill the gap in understanding excellent leadership practices and behaviors for ongoing effort to improve student outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Excellent Leadership, Leadership Development, Leadership Theories*

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Dr. Kiral completed his doctorate degree entitled “The Relationship Between Locus of Control and Perfectionism Perception of the Primary School Administrators” at the Institute of Educational Sciences at Ankara University. As a faculty member of Aydın Adnan Menderes University Faculty of Education Sciences, he teaches a variety of courses at graduate levels. Dr. Kiral published many books, book chapters, scientific papers and reports in the field of Education Administration. Dr. Kiral mostly focuses on the leadership of school administrators and its reflections on education. Recently, he established the “Excellent Leadership Academy” to prepare and develop excellent leaders.

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### Introduction

Since the beginning of human history, human beings in general have always made efforts to achieve the better of what is present. This effort has been particularly evident at the beginning of the 21st century especially with the increasing knowledge and developing technology. Human's desire to achieve the better may lead him to go beyond of what is present and not to be satisfied with what he has. The pursuit and effort of human to achieve the better can lead him to go out of his comfort zone. Indeed, this pursuit and effort can manifest itself in different ways in every area of life from drinking the best water to get the best education. In fact, this pursuit is the desire of human beings to achieve the excellence and it is in their nature. Human beings are in search and desire of a life in which they can evaluate their thoughts, emotions and behaviors, play the roles in their relationships with the environment, question life, and change their situation in order to comply with the demands and difficulties of life. Hence, human beings are in a desire and search for a life that compelled and encouraged to be more proficient and excellent beings than ever. Humankind's search for excellence can also be seen in Management Theories. The process from the Scientific Management Understanding within the Theory of Classical Management through the Total Quality Management understanding within the Contemporary Management Theory is the point achieved as a result of always seeking for the better. Considering the developing technology and changing needs, it can be said that this search will go on increasingly. In his study to increase the productivity of his employees, Taylor (1967) tried to put forward the best and most accurate way of doing the job within the shortest time. Subsequent researchers tried to reveal the best of the employee, which formed the basis of industrial psychology. The pursuit and effort to achieve the better has also manifested itself in human relations (Blase & Blase, 1998). The researchers like Deming (1981), Feigenbaum (1983), Juran (1988), Crosby (1989), Efil (2016), and Şimşek (2018) who made Total Quality Management to be widespread, argued that the search for continuous improvement is effective in the improvement of the quality of organizations. Crosby (1989) aimed the perfection with zero fault approach in production and stated that the problems that can arise in achieving these goals are generally caused by management. He stated that managers have high responsibility in obtaining flawless products and providing excellent services.

From the day when management was scientifically put forward, humanity's pursuit for achieving the best in management has continued and it seems that, most probably, it will continue. So much so that this process from management to governance is one of the clear indicators. Of course, schools, which are socially open systems are influenced by the changes in the understanding of management. The fact that schools whose raw material in human can raise their input as more qualified individuals at the end of the process can be provided only by aiming to achieve the best at every stage of education. According to Peters and Waterman, in the organizations that increase the quality of their service, the desire to be the best, the emphasis on the details to improve the quality of service, the belief that service providers and receivers are important, and the pleasure of being the best or looking for the best are quite high (1982).

Schools have made great progress towards being the best in from past to present. According to Blatchford (2015), in the changing world, excellence at schools can be achieved by processing tradition, present and future. Schools are trying to balance and harmonize the values from the past with the foreseeing the cultural norms in the future. The fact that schools, where children are educated in a planned and programmed manner, can achieve the desired good, be effective and excellent is, of course, possible with the administration of education, educational leadership rather than management and by going one step further, moving towards excellent leadership in education and demonstrating it in their behaviors. Indeed, this research aims to understand the excellent leadership and to reveal the theoretical background in educational organizations; (1) leadership and continuous improvement; (2) perfectionism and excellence, (3) excellent leadership in educational organizations, and (4) implementation of excellent leadership in school are discussed below in the light of the literature.

### **Leadership and Continuous Improvement**

Excellent leadership is discussed as a new type of leadership within the framework of leadership and continuous improvement in this section.

Although the concepts of leader and leadership are as old as human history and many studies (Yavuz, 2016; Kiral & Başaran, 2018; Eren, 2020) have been conducted on them, the interest in these concepts has been increasing day by day. The reason why this interest is increasing day by day is the need for information about what kind of a leadership the leaders, who play a role for human beings and shape their future, have been doing and will do. It can be said that this need, in general, will disappear with humanity. The anxiety created by the fact that the world is moving to an uninhabitable place because of the people who are accepted as leaders in the 21st century shows that there is a greater need for positive leaders seeking excellence than ever before. When the literature on leadership is examined, it can be said that the concept differs according to disciplines. As leadership has such a wide area of use is of course the cause for different definitions. In general, the view of leadership can be as much as the number of people who define it. Indeed, the definition of leadership can be arbitrary and subjective. According to Kiral and Başaran (2018), each person can express his view of leadership through his own lens. The definitions of leadership can be shaped according to the situation and time in its context, or according to the emotional, sociological, physical, cognitive and biological characteristics of the person who exhibits leadership behaviors and makes this definition. In addition to this, the characteristics and personality traits of the individual who exhibits leadership behaviors is fundamentally significant in this large spectrum. The leadership behavior exhibited by the leader gains meaning with his character and personality, and forms the visible part of the personality and character reflected on the outside. Therefore, acting by considering this fact while dealing with the definitions of leadership can provide a better understanding of the definitions regarding leadership. As a matter of fact, the functionality of the definitions put forward about leadership is very important. Hence, excellent leadership in education is functional as it involves the effort to achieve the best.

It is fact that excellent schools in which excellent education is provided can be created with excellent leaders. According to Darling-Hammond, employees of excellent organizations deserve excellent leaders. Excellent organizations should have excellent leaders (2007). According to Galannes, excellent leaders are in the pursuit of the best way to take those who follow them to where they want to go (2003). Indeed, excellent leaders strive to build the present in the safest and best way by keeping the past in mind and imagining the future. These leaders make excellence a habit, not just an act and thus, they can make it a way of life for the internal and external stakeholders of schools. According to Theoharis and Brooks, school administrators should strive to find out how to create excellent schools and stick to this effort continuously (2012). The quote “good, better, the best; never give up; until your good is better; and your better is the best” by Hawking (2006) shows always one step further; the journey and belief in excellence. The journey of human beings for excellence can be initiated by excellent leaders who seek and strive for this excellence. According to Creech, excellent leaders are generally those with high standards who constantly work to achieve better (2018). The limit of their journey of excellence is related to themselves and to those who follow them. The pursuit for excellent leadership in education can be built on the basis of this fact. The phenomenon of leadership, which resembles a big sycamore rooted in depth, owes its depth beneath its trunk to the sprouts it extends to the sky. From past to present, the sprouts have been knotty; the knots have become branches; and the branches formed the main part of the trunk. In fact, the reason for the fact that the roots of the sycamore have gone down deep is these new small sprouts. Every sprout leads the roots of the sycamore to go down deeper as a new breath and a new hope. It seems that every study conducted on leadership will lead leadership to be clarified and rooted. Therefore, this study carries the pains of a new leadership approach that can be examined within modern leadership because excellent leadership has not yet been explicitly demonstrated in education despite the fact that excellent leadership behaviors have already been experienced by people.

Indeed, the excellent leadership approach in education will be handled for the first time based on a wide range of literature and will be open to discussion in the field of education with this study. However, it can be stated that various studies (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Şişman, 2011, etc.) have been conducted on excellent organizations and on the pursuit of excellence. In fact, excellent organizations can be created by excellent leaders who exhibit excellent leadership behaviors. The fact that this subject was not explored in education increased the researcher's interest in the subject. Thus, the researcher has opened his excellent leadership approach to discussion in the light of literature. It is important that an issue such as excellent leadership, which has not been discussed so far, is opened for discussion. Because, it is thought that those who will make the change in human resources in the world will be the leaders who exhibit excellent leadership behaviors in education (MoNE, 2019).

The need for the administration of schools that educate new leaders to make the world a more livable place by the administrators who exhibit excellent leadership behaviors that will set an example for new leaders is present today, just as it was in the past, and it is possible to say that this necessity will be present in the future, too. In this regard, what is expected from the administrators of schools, which are the educational institutions with the mission of raising the leaders of the future, one of the political functions of education, is to exhibit excellent leadership behaviors in education. It should be ensured that those who exhibit these leadership behaviors are identified and they are appointed to schools as administrators. The fact that school leaders exhibit excellent leadership behaviors in education is related to their positive perfectionism behaviors. In order to be able to understand this positive perfectionism (excellence), which is thought to be the basis of excellent leadership behavior, it is necessary to understand perfectionism.

### **Perfectionism and Excellence**

Within the framework of perfectionism and excellence, it has been stated that positive perfectionism is a phenomenon that makes people's lives better. It has been argued that the concept of excellence in excellent leadership actually corresponds to positive perfectionism (excellence).

Perfectionism, which affects the behaviors of individuals, is one of the personality traits that differ from individual to individual (Adler, 1956; Ellis, 1962). The first studies on perfectionism were conducted by such researchers as Adler, (1956); Ellis, (1962); Missildine, (1963) but the widespread studies regarding perfectionism were by Burns, (1980); Frost, Marten, Lahart and Rosenblate, (1990); Hewitt and Flett, (1991a, 1991b). Researchers (Adler, 1956; Ellis, 1962; Missildine, 1963; Horney, 1970; Hollender, 1978; Burns, 1980; Halgin & Leahy, 1989; Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein & Mosher, 1991; Kottman & Ashby, 2000; Antony & Swinson, 2000, 2009, etc.) have put forward many different definitions of perfectionism.

Some of these researchers examined perfectionism positively (Horney, 1970; Hollender, 1978; Adderholdt-Eliot & Goldberg, 1999; Basco, 1999; Kottman & Ashby, 2000 etc.), while some others examined perfectionism negatively (Ellis, 1962; Missildine, 1963; Burns, 1980, etc.) and both positively and negatively (Adler, 1956; Halgin & Leahy, 1989, etc.). Basco (1999) defined perfectionism as the self-discipline and orderliness exhibited by the goal-oriented individuals in their activities; Kottman and Ashby (2000) defined perfectionism as a motive that ensures the individual to achieve high standards and be systematic, and that improves the individual's performance. Hollender (1978) argued that perfectionism is the desire of the individual to perform better than the current situation for both himself / herself and for others. Missildine (1963) defined perfectionism as the dissatisfaction and low self-esteem of the individual. Ellis (1962) defined perfectionism as the impossible and irrational beliefs of the individual that cannot be reached and sees this as a symptom of a health problem. According to Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein and Mosher (1991), perfectionism is the impossible and unreachable high standards combined with the fear of failure. According to Halgin and Leahy (1989), perfectionism is the individual's over forcing attitude to achieve unreachable goals, and the cognitive and behavioral discomfort

when he cannot achieve. Adler (1956) described perfectionism as a condition that emerges as a result of the innate efforts and the natural consequence of life, and stated that there can be no life without struggling and lusting. According to him, while the positive perfectionists strive to benefit from the perfect, the negative perfectionists strive to demonstrate their superiority.

In the dictionary of Turkish Language Association, perfectionism is expressed as; (1) excessive meticulousness; (2) aiming to achieve moral maturity and (3) making excessive efforts to be perfect (2019). In the light of the explanations mentioned above; it can be said that the definitions have such common points as (1) high standards, (2) performance and (3) effort. Therefore, perfectionism can be defined as the effort of the individual to achieve the high performance standards created by the individual for himself/herself and others, and by others for the individual (Kiral, 2012). Fulfilling or not fulfilling the high performance standards set by the individual for himself or by others for the individual, or by the individual for others can lead to positive or negative states in the individual or others. While the positive state contributes to the achievement of the set goals (Stoeber & Becker, 2008), the negative state can lead to various health problems in individuals (Flett, Panico & Hewitt, 2011). In addition to the positive effects such as achieving the goals in the peoples' lives, raising their standards, living regularly, perfectionism can lead to such negative effects as anxiety, pressure and procrastination (Beck, 1976; Chang, 1998; Accordino, Accordino & Slaney, 2000; Flett, Besser, Davis & Hewitt, 2003; Stoeber & Rambow, 2006; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Dunkley, Blankstein & Berg, 2011; Boysan & Kiral, 2016; Boysan & Kiral, 2017, etc.). While positive perfectionism plays an important role in achieving high performance standards; negative perfectionism, on the contrary, can lead to a decrease in the individual's performance (Stoeber & Becker, 2008).

Therefore, perfectionism can be handled as a personality trait that can lead to both positive and negative situations in the individual. Every human being is in the pursuit of improving his competence till the top point. However, the important point to be considered here is that the individual should become aware of the competencies of both himself and others and know where to stand. This point is where his leadership comes in. The leader who knows where to stand and shapes his actions accordingly may benefit from the positive outputs of perfectionism.

In the very first studies of perfectionism (Burns, 1980; Pacht, 1984), the concept was examined as one-dimensional involving negative situations, while recent studies (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a; Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia & Neubauer, 1993; Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippive & Ashby, 2001; Suddart & Slaney, 2001; Hill, Huelsman, Furr, Kibler, Vicente & Kennedy, 2004; Kiral, 2012) examined perfectionism as multi-dimensional involving both the negative and positive situations. By attributing to several researchers (Hamachek, 1978; Slade & Dewey, 1986; Owens & Slade, 1987; Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a; Frost et al., 1993), Slade and Owens (1998) established perfectionism with the dual process model as Type1 and Type2 (Table 1).

Table 1. Perfectionism According to Dual Process Model

Researchers	Type 1 Perfectionism	Type 2 Perfectionism
Hamachek (1978)	Normal	Neurotic
Slade & Dewey (1986)	Satisfying	Dissatisfying
Owens & Slade (1987)		
Frost et al. (1990)	Personal standards, order	Excessive attention to mistakes, family-related criticism, family-related expectations, being suspicious of actions
Hewitt & Flett (1991a)	Self-oriented perfectionism	Socially prescribed perfectionism
Frost et al. (1993)	Positive efforts	Negative assessment view

Derived from the study of Peter D. Slade & Glynn Owens (1998). A Dual Process Model of Perfectionism Based on Reinforcement Theory.

When Table 1 is examined, it can be said that Type 1 perfectionism is positive and Type 2 perfectionism is negative. For this reason, the fact that individuals are driven away from the negative perfectionism, which is defined as Type 2, and directed towards Type 1 perfectionism, which is believed to be good for them, not only in the organizations they work but also in their lives can only be possible by the leaders who have adopted positive perfectionism (excellence).

Apart from the studies mentioned above, perfectionism has also been generally considered as positive and negative in the studies of different researchers (Hill, Zrull & Turlington, 1997; Cox, Enns & Clara, 2002; Kobori & Tonno, 2004; Bieling, Israeli & Antony, 2004). In their studies, Slade and Owens (1998) examined perfectionism as negative and positive; Hill et al. (1997) as positive and neurotic; Bieling et al. (2004) and Kırdök (2004) as positive and negative; and Cox et al. (2002) as adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism. Among the positive and negative dimensions of perfectionism, it can be said that there are the sub-dimensions of the scales developed by Frost et al. (1990), Hewitt and Flett (1991a) and Slaney et al. (2001). Hence, Bieling et al. (2004) stated that the dimensions of socially prescribed perfectionism, excessive attention to mistakes, family-related criticism, family-related expectations and being suspicious of actions are the dimensions of maladaptive perfectionism; while the dimensions of self-oriented perfectionism, others-oriented perfectionism, personal standards and order are the dimensions of adaptive perfectionism.

Adler (2005) stated in his research that perfectionism has two dimensions as healthy and unhealthy perfectionism. Therefore, perfectionism can be said to be a phenomenon that involves healthy and unhealthy situations. If perfectionism involves the pursuit of the functional perfection for individuals, it should be considered as a normal, healthy and motivating element; and if it involves the pursuit of impossible standards, it should be considered as a neurotic and unhealthy element (Hamachek, 1978; Shafran, Cooper & Fairburn, 2002; Stoeber & Becker, 2008). Healthy perfectionists have high personal standards and are able to adopt a flexible attitude depending on the situation, and even if they cannot achieve the desired high standards, they can be satisfied with what they have already achieved.

Healthy perfectionists are highly motivated and can achieve great success. When they can direct their energy to success, they can contribute to their personal and professional development. However, neurotic and unhealthy perfectionists are not content with themselves even if they have achieved the high standards they have aimed at and question that their efforts are inadequate and why they cannot do better. While healthy perfectionists strive for achievable goals, on the other hand, unhealthy perfectionists set unrealistic goals and try to achieve goals that exceed their performance. This can lead to cognitive and physical problems in them. As can be seen, perfectionism can be expressed as a personality trait that can involve the desirable and undesirable characteristics. Thus, people should interact with each other and be able to exhibit the positive perfectionism (excellent) characteristics of the leaders they follow in their behaviors.

Perfectionism is considered as the equivalent of such concepts as being flawless, achieving high standards and demonstrating high performance, superiority, and effectiveness by the researchers (Hewitt & Flett, 2002; Stoeber, Kobori & Tanno, 2010; Şişman, 2011). Indeed, these features can lead the individual to achieve certain standards and performance. However, of these concepts, the search and expectation of being perfect reflects the negative and unhealthy side of perfectionism (Antony & Swinson, 2000). Exhibiting high performance, achieving high standards, showing superiority and effectiveness reflect the positive and healthy side of perfectionism and they all correspond to optimal excellence. In this sense, Şişman (2011) argued that effectiveness and excellence are equal. He considered effectiveness as the degree to which the organization achieved its goals or the ability to produce an expected impact, and described organizations as effective or excellent organizations. However, perfectionism reflects an excessive perfection. In fact, perfectionism is the optimal level of perfection (excellence) but it also involves negative, in other words, neurotic and unhealthy perfectionism (Adderholdt-Eliot & Goldberg, 1999).

In healthy and optimal level of perfectionism, the individual is aware of his own limits and is happy to achieve the best results even if he does not meet the standards, he has set before for himself and is satisfied with what he has achieved. However, in unhealthy and pathological perfectionism, even if the individual achieves the best results, he is only satisfied with the situation that occurs for that moment, hesitates that it is the best result and always sees a missing part of the result he has achieved. He tries to eliminate this deficiency but he strives to eliminate this deficiency in vain as he lacks the competence to eliminate this deficiency. Indeed, whatever it is that is being worked upon, it feels uncomfortable for the individual to try to achieve the best and strive for perfection without being competent on the subject because the individual has the desire to do the job well and tries to do it but he may experience the anxiety of not achieving the best results.

In fact, though perfectionism seems to be good, it is like a double-edged knife (Basco, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary to know how to use this double-edged knife because if the perfectionist does not know where to stand, it can lead to negative situations. Perfectionism, on the one hand, motivates the individual to increase his own performance and that of the others around him, which is desirable; on the other hand, it can cause psycho-social and physical problems both for himself and for those around him by making himself and those around him uncomfortable for the performance they exhibit. What is expected and desired from leaders is to pursue and strive for positive perfectionism (excellence) for the people around them and for themselves. For this reason, leaders who influence people should put positive perfectionism at the center of their lives and aim to lead people to achieve the best. For this, they should be expected to exhibit excellent leadership behaviors.

#### **Excellent Leadership in Educational Organizations**

It was discussed that educational organizations should always have an understanding aiming at excellent within the framework of excellence in educational organizations. The stages that educational organizations have reached so far have been presented based on effective school, school development and effective administrators who manage these schools. It has been underlined that this continuous search for better is essentially the pursuit of excellent.

Perfection affects every aspect of the lives of perfectionists. Indeed, perfectionists not only see perfection as a part of their lives, but in general they also live it deeply in their lives (Hewitt & Flett, 1990; Blatt, 1995; Slaney & Ashby, 1996). However, the important thing here is to put excellence at the center of life. Because excellence ensures successful progress, while perfection can lead to problems. Leaders are also among those who live and want to live excellence deeply in their lives (Maxwell, 1999). Hence, leaders perform an important function of influencing the people around them and directing them in the desired way. Achieving the best and expecting people to do their best in what they do form the basis of self-oriented excellence and others-oriented excellence. Self-oriented excellence and others-oriented excellence are important leadership skills that motivate the individual himself and the people around him, and can lead to desirable behaviors in both himself and those around him. In addition to this, the socially oriented expectation of excellence may also express the excellence behavior that the followers expect from the leader (Einstein, Lovibond & Gaston, 2000; Stoeber & Becker, 2008). In general, because of the visions they put forward, leaders are the first among the people who do not think of excellence separately from their lives and seek to achieve the best. Because leaders influence people with the promise of a better future and lead them in the desired direction. However, those who follow the leader expect high leadership behaviors from the leader.

A better future can be realized by the people who are aware of their competences and expectations, who have achieved healthy perfectionism (excellence) and who demonstrate excellent leadership behaviors. Therefore, excellent leadership can be defined as the fact that the individual knows his/her own and those of his/her group competencies and expectations in all kinds of activities and by taking these competences and expectations into consideration, as the

journey to achieve the better. The journey to the best is a process based on the development of the affected person or group as well as the self-improvement of the influencer that requires continuity. In the journey to achieve the best, the limit depends on both the leader and his followers. The journey to excellence requires stability and persistence. It can be said that the most beautiful journey of excellence is relatively the humanization process of human. Humanization is only possible with the education received.

Education affects all the physical, mental and psycho-social life areas of human beings. Education is a driving force in the journey of human to achieve the better. Even though the journey of human for excellence begins within the family (Adderholdt-Eliot & Goldberg, 1999), it is the school where the actual journey takes place systematically. Considering the fact that the internal and external stakeholders of the schools, which are socially open systems and which have dynamic structures, are changing day by day, it can be said to be difficult for schools to keep up with the era only with the appointed school administrators. In fact, the era we are in is an era in which the countries that reach the best of everything before everyone and that have made it the dynamo of social and economic development are the arbiters. Excellent schools that will raise individuals to produce the best and offer the best service can achieve this only by excellent leaders who aim to achieve the best. It can be said that in the journey of the excellent leader to achieve the best, the excellent leader is the person who takes into account the competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and expectations of both himself /herself and the group, and the opportunities and the conditions he is in and who acts accordingly. Excellent leaders strive to maximize their soft skills, as well as those of their followers. It seems that in the 21st century, it is difficult for schools to achieve the best by being managed only by standard administrators or executive leaders who apply what is required from them. The administration of schools is expected to be performed by the school leaders who exhibit excellent leadership behaviors in pursuit of the best at all times.

The society and the world changing every day so as to achieve better continuously and fast, meets the human resources realizing this continuous change from educational organizations that realize this and make this seeking a form of life. For this reason, educational organizations should strive to educate people at the highest level in terms of their interests and abilities as individuals that the world and society necessitates. In order to educate students in the best way, policy makers have tried to maximize the quality of education at schools under various concepts such as total quality management, school development, school reform, learning school, self-managing and self-developing school, curriculum laboratory schools, school-centered management, school-based management (Balci, 2014). In essence, regardless of the form and title of the practices mentioned, the main goal of all is to find the best in education and to find excellence. This pursuit of excellence can be found in many countries, particularly in the United States of America, under various names like effective schools, alternative schools, home schooling, excellent schools (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Aydın, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Şişman, 2011; Balci, 2014; Russo, 2016).

What is expected from the practitioners of education is the realization of these alternative implementations put forward by policy makers or researchers. Indeed, the school administrator, who is one of the educational practitioners, should be able to perform the expected activities in the best way as one of the most important elements of the education process and make this the form of life. The school administrator is primarily responsible for the management and development of the school in accordance with the aims. The internal and external stakeholders of education expect the school administrator to fulfill their duties and responsibilities at the highest level. Whether the school administrator have fulfilled his duties and responsibilities is assessed through the supervisions by both the internal and external stakeholders of the school. According to Balci, the pursuit of providing the best for students in a society with a high level of education constitutes the fundamental interest of the society (2014). In most of effective school and school development studies (Sweeney, 1982; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Mortimore, 1991, 1992, 1995; Balci, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2014; Fullan, 1992; Şişman, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2000; Blase & Kirby,

2000; Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Ouston, 2017; Ertürk & Memişoğlu, 2018 etc.), it was revealed that leaders were significant in the effectiveness and development of schools, and in the formation of their culture.

Ertürk and Memişoğlu (2018) stated that the administrators of effective schools are leaders; Levine and Lezotte (1990) expressed that effective schools have extraordinary leadership; Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) argued that high expectations are created by the leaders for everyone in the school; and Sweeney (1982) stated that leadership is performed for the curriculum, a regular environment for success is established and high expectations are put forward for students. Day, Harris and Hadfield revealed that, in effective school studies, high standards are set for teachers and students in the activities carried out in these schools and that teaching is performed to achieve excellence (2001). It is important to set high standards for success in effective schools and to take the necessary measures to achieve them (Harris, 2002) because the high level of education and training is at the heart of these schools. For this reason, especially the activities of the internal stakeholders are important. Teachers can influence their own teaching and the learning of the learner with the high expectations put forward regarding learning of learner and their own teaching performance. The school administrator creates a school environment that supports teaching, emphasizes success within the school, evaluates whether this has been achieved or not and takes the necessary measures (Sweeney, 1982; Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2001; Balcı, 2014; Fullan, 2014).

When effective school studies are examined, it can be said that these studies generally have the function of revealing the characteristics of the best schools and leaders. In their study, Mangieri and Arnn revealed that school administrators who supervise teaching, evaluate teacher performance and establish educational programs have made remarkable progress towards excellence (1985). As can be seen, school administrators play the key role in the effectiveness of school in many effective school researches (Rosenholtz, 1985). The instructional leadership behavior of the administrator is one of the important factors of school effectiveness (Leithwood, 2004; Boonla & Treputtharat, 2014). Indeed, there is a significant correlation between the leadership style of the administrator and school effectiveness (Murphy, 1990). With their leadership, school administrators can direct teachers and students to excellence (Kirk & Jones, 2004). Effective school studies are the search for excellence at schools, and in essence, they are the search of human's excellence (Clark, Lotto & Astuto, 1984). Ultimately, the main purpose of all these studies is the desire to achieve excellent. According to Leithwood and Riehl, effective school administrators exhibit excellent leadership. Excellent schools are managed by excellent leaders; unsuccessful schools are managed by weak managers. Therefore, leaders play a key role in successful education and training (2005).

Leadership exhibited is important in the effectiveness of schools. The effectiveness and excellence of schools can be increased by the leadership exhibited (Sergiovanni, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 2007). According to Langer, excellent leadership is an effective factor in the excellence of schools (2004). Excellent schools work well and are different from other schools. From the school administrator to the student, everybody works for excellence. The fact that a few teachers are good within a school does not make this school the best. Everybody in this school fights together for a common goal, learns together, works in harmony, and moves forward together for the better. School administrators and teachers know exactly what they need, inform each other and try to fill in the missing points. In particular, the minds of the administrators and teachers in this school are constantly busy on how to bring the school to a better place. Indeed, whoever is interested in education can look at these schools and see the continuous progress there.

While achieving the goals of the school make the school administrator an effective administrator, the fact that he strives and makes others strive continuously after achieving these goals to achieve the new goals at the highest level according to the situation by influencing the stakeholders of the school can make him an excellent leader. Effectiveness involves the realization level of the

existing goals, whereas excellence involves both the pursuit and effort to achieve both the existing goals and the new goals in the best way. In fact, the pursuit and effort to achieve the best in the goals expresses the journey to the summit of the school stakeholders' potential. According to Stoll, the journey of human to achieve the best involves a development-oriented and continuous situation (1999). The important thing here is how much people use and develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. For this reason, the journey of excellence can vary according to the willingness of the school stakeholders to increase their potential. It is to realize one's potential and use it till the limit, in other words, push himself and reach excellence in this way. Excellent leaders move towards the summit of their potential for both themselves and their followers. Indeed, while excellent leaders change and develop themselves and those around them in their journey to achieve the best, they have set the basis for their new journey to new summits and started this journey all together. In the journey of excellence, the leader has to determine the direction, define the vision, express it and make it accepted, and create high performance expectations for the stakeholders. According to Leithwood and Riehl, it is very important for the leader to develop people so that they meet these expectations, to provide intellectual incentives, give personal and collective support, and present himself as the role model (2005). In this process, if the excellent leader organizes and maintains the tasks and relationships well, he will be awarded with the highest performance, excellence (Bass, 1985).

In the journey of excellence, the excellent leader can create a school culture in which success is given the greatest importance at school and relatively highest performance is expected from each stakeholder according to their potential regarding each task they are assigned (McEwan, 2009). In order to increase the likelihood of student success by creating a strong school culture, the school administrator should create a sense of purpose within the school, help the employees to develop the skills necessary to achieve the best consciously, provide them the resources they need and take measures to increase their motivation. He should eliminate the situations that will prevent this culture to be formed and organize the curriculum accordingly (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992). School administrators can achieve this with strong supportive leadership. In order to do this, it is necessary for the school administrator to create a shared vision, set high goals by taking into account the competencies of the stakeholders, develop them and manage the process regularly, and make it a continuous process (Mendels, 2012). Despite the fact that teacher quality has a significant impact on student motivation and achievement, the quality of leadership also has a significant impact on the motivation and achievement of teachers and students to a considerable extent, which cannot be underestimated (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). With the effective school movement, the school administrator is looking for ways to create excellence at school or create the excellent school. The excellent school does not only ensure the commitment of teachers and students to quality education and training but it also creates a healthy school climate and culture (Balci, 2014). In order to find these excellent schools, effective school administrators play an important role in creating the culture and climate (Fullan, 1992, 2001). For this reason, school administrators need to be strengthened and empower their employees (Blase & Blase, 1994; Kiral, 2015; Ross & Cozzens, 2016; Kiral, 2016). School administrators should allow teachers to conduct researches, participate in researches and develop themselves professionally in order to increase their tendency to teaching and learning. They should strive to increase their capacity (Hopkins, Harris & Jackson, 1997; Lambert, 1998). If staff development is disrupted, the fulfillment of the expected high level objectives can be interrupted, too.

The expectation of excellence, quality and high standards to be seen in school administration and school organization are among the reasons for effective school researches. Efforts to achieve excellence can be achieved through various changes at schools and through school development approach (Balci, 2014). In fact, both school development and effective school studies are interrelated and supportive of each other. While school effectiveness indicates the goal to be achieved, school development shows the path to be followed so as to achieve this goal (Barth, 1990). Indeed, the fact that the school tries to achieve its aims at the highest level by taking into account the potential of its stakeholders and the opportunities it has is the excellence of the school. Hence, if school effectiveness and school development studies are directed towards

achieving the best possible results, the journey of excellence can begin. The sustainability of the journey of excellence is only possible with excellent leaders have adopted and made the stakeholders adopt the culture of excellence.

The pursuit of excellence necessitates continuous progress and change. According to Hopkins, in school development, school is the focus of change (2001). This change can be accomplished by excellent leaders who keep themselves moving towards continually improving. School development requires systematic efforts to change the learning conditions and other internal conditions that lead to this in order to achieve the desired educational goals (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992). The ultimate goal of all the activities conducted is to change and make student development successful and make them happy. For this success, first of all, the necessary conditions should be prepared within the school and the change should spread from the top to the bottom. The person who will provide this change from the top to the bottom is the school leader who has adopted this task as his mission. In school effectiveness studies, change generally spreads from the bottom to the top. There is a need for educational development strategies where teachers, school administrators and schools are at the center. In such a development study, the internal stakeholders of the school feels belonging more. School effectiveness requires the performance measures of the teachers and the school. It requires cooperation with the parents. When it comes to performance, the leader school administrator stays free and is expected to take into consideration the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, equality and excellence (Carter, 2000; Bass, 1985). Excellence measure of excellent leaders can be shaped according to the boundaries of himself and his followers.

School development is, in particular, the use of results obtained from effective school findings in non-effective schools (Edmonds, 1979). The basis of school development studies is the results obtained from effective school studies (Hopkins, 2001). Leadership significantly influences school effectiveness and school development and paves the way for excellence (Reynolds & Packer, 1996; Wallace Foundation, 2013). While the internally produced school change before 1990s was taking into account the needs of the school's internal stakeholders and was based on their development, in other words, from practice through theory, the general educational change that occurred after 1990s was based on external factors, and efforts were made so that the internal stakeholders of the school comply with it. Indeed, the quality assurance system based on quality management for schools is an innovation activity that comes from outside of the school in order for the school to compete and that schools have to comply with the requirements of it. While effective school was associated with academic achievement before 1990s, it was regarded as the organization that aimed to raise individuals with high level thinking abilities such as problem solving, analytic and critical thinking, doing research, and empathy as well as academic achievement after 1990s (Reynolds & Packer, 1996; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Ghani, Siraj & Radzive Elham, 2011; Balci, 2014). However, in the current period, it does not seem possible for schools to achieve the desired results by initiating the change in school development only internally or only externally. It is necessary to adapt to both internal and external change in order to catch the excellent schools. Indeed, the most important skill of the 21st century manifests itself as adaptation.

As can be seen, school development was carried out on a theoretical basis and on a practical basis for certain periods. For this reason, making use of both the internal and external elements which reveal the effectiveness of schools in school development will ensure successful school development. Therefore, it is necessary that theory and practice are intertwined. Expectations and demands of both internal and external stakeholders from schools continue to increase day by day. Together with the fact that school administration should respond to the expectations and requests in the best possible way, it should be ensured that they organize themselves and raise their stakeholders in the best way. Indeed, in different countries (England, the USA, etc.), it was ensured that vocational qualifications were developed for school administrators and teachers, the occupations were reformed and their standards were raised. The latest study in Turkey is the 2023 Vision Document. With the 2023 Vision Document, efforts have been started to ensure the

growth of intellectual capital in the best way. It has planned to prepare a development plan by every school taking into consideration the region, conditions and the structure of the school every year, reorganize the selection criteria of the school administrators and teachers, decrease the class hours of students and enacting the law on teaching profession. It is emphasized that human resources are of great value and necessary efforts should be made to maximize the impact of this value in terms of cognitive, affective and physical aspects (MoNE, 2019). The 2023 Vision Document emphasizes the kaizen philosophy based on lifelong learning, quality based approach, high standard expectations and continuous development at schools, which is the main indicator of the journey to excellence. A document like the 2023 Vision Document, was previously published in the UK in 1992 as the White Paper Reform. With the White Paper Reform in the UK, it was underlined that human capital was of great importance and that education standards depended on such framework issues as quality, diversity, choice, school autonomy, accountability for development and change, and it was grounded on demanding the best for every child, a new job training project and quality and excellence at schools. Therefore, excellence at schools became the keyword. It was aimed to be strictly adhered to the pursuit of excellence in educational programs and to establish a stable education system that determined international excellence levels (White Paper, 1992).

Beginning with the 1990s, major changes were made in the duties of school administrators such as participating in the decision-making by the parents, providing decentralized administration, making strategic plans, providing individualized education according to the needs of students. In the first quarter of the 21st century, schools have gone in the race to do the best of everything. These school administrators are expected to improve themselves and the stakeholders of the school continuously, anticipate the changes in the environment with a proactive manner and take necessary measures. The expectations from effective schools are to set up a structure that can adapt to the social, political, economic and cultural changes quickly and in the best way, that can change and develop the school's internal and external stakeholders accordingly, and to manage the process of this structure in the best way. Therefore, in the world, where expectations multiply day by day, the school administrator plays a key role in effective school and school development process. What was expected from the school administrator was to be the school director in 1980s and instructional leader in 1990s but what is being expected from the school administrator in the 2000s is the excellent leadership seeking for the best of his potential as much as possible. The researches carried out (Scheerens & Creemers, 1989; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Leithwood & Rielh, 2005; McEwan, 2009; Malá & Čerešník, 2013 etc.) revealed that school administrators are now in a critical leadership position because they are in the administrative position of schools that raise the intellectual capital of their country and thus, they can influence the internal and external stakeholders of schools (Blase & Kirby, 2000). The school administrator should take action, create the most appropriate conditions and situations for the stakeholders of the school to take action and they should be able to support them and be a role model for them in every issue (Balci, 2014). School administrators can demonstrate excellent leadership in excellent schools by controlling their attitudes, assumptions, and practices. According to Leithwood and Rielh, the success of the school largely depends on the success-oriented educational leadership (2005) and excellent leadership behaviors of the school administrator.

The school leader, who exhibits effective leadership behavior, encourages the employees at school to behave in the desired direction and manner, and becomes a model for them (McEwan, 2009). Effective administrators can create an environment that enhances the motivation of both employees and students by providing them with the best learning and teaching environment for their development in terms of cognitive, affective, dynamic, social and cultural aspects (Malá & Čerešník, 2013). Effective school administrator is the person who focuses on the expectation of high level of success, determines the appropriate teaching strategy for this and establishes the school climate, evaluates student development, coordinates education and supports teachers (Scheerens & Creemers, 1989). Edmonds (1979) described the leadership behaviors of the school administrator as showing strong leadership in instructional issues, clearly explaining the expectations from the students and teachers, and developing a management system for the

success of the curriculum. The role of the school administrator who aims to standardize effective teaching practice is to maintain high expectations for teachers and students, supervise classroom teaching, coordinate school curriculum, monitor students' progress and make the necessary arrangements (Barth, 1986). Thus, the school administrator is expected to focus on instructional leadership (Greenfield, 1987). According to Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, the behaviors of successful school administrators are; forming the vision and deciding on the direction to go, understanding and developing people, reorganizing and teaching the organization, managing learning programs (2008). The school administrator should motivate employees and form a vision based on the high performance standards they have accepted. The competencies of school stakeholders should be increased. The motivation, commitment and capacities of teachers should be utilized in building the school culture and a stable and strong infrastructure should be established within the school (Elmore, 2000).

Yulk (1989) described successful administrators as being able to motivate employees, clarify organizational roles and goals, plan and organize, support employees, delegate work to employees and monitor their behaviors. Blasé and Kirby (2000) revealed that school administrators use plenty of strategies such as giving priority to instruction programs, creating high expectations for stakeholders, the ability to use resources effectively, creating a safe school climate, etc. and direct teachers towards the goals of schools. Blumberg and Grenfield stated that the characteristics of effective administrator as determining the vision of the school, entrepreneurship and being the source. They revealed that effective schools have effective leaders, and that the primary function of the school administrator is to influence and control, thereby increase student achievement (1986). Blase and Blase expressed that effective school administrators set clear goals for schools and high standards for academically successful students. They found that effective school administrators act in constant communication with teachers and create alternatives for education, build a process based on doing research, reflecting and discovering rather than giving orders (1998). According to Leithwood and Jantzi, effective school leaders indirectly but strongly influence the school's effectiveness and students' academic achievement (2000a, 2000b).

As can be seen, various characteristics of effective school administrators were revealed in the studies conducted regarding school administrators. Some of these are creating goals for the school, performing the tasks to achieve these goals, creating high expectations from school stakeholders regarding the school and education (Özdemir & Sezgin, 2002; Şişman, 2011; Balcı, 2014). Setting goals for his/her school and motivating school stakeholders to achieve these contributes to the school administrator's success as an administrator leader. However, the fact that the goals set by the school administrator for the school are extremely high or low may cause various problems. On the one hand, if the goals set are low, they may be relatively easy to meet and may not be able to contribute to the development of the stakeholders as they remain under their existing competences. On the other hand, if these goals are too high, it can be difficult for the stakeholders to meet them. It will also be difficult to objectively measure the extent to which the objectives are achieved. Therefore, while these goals can be difficult for some people; they may be quite simple for others. The important thing here is that the school administrator should set accessible goals for the school that will force people but can be achieved, and should reward those who achieve them. If the school administrator forces people excessively and sets goals above their capacity, this can lead to alienation and boredom towards the goals. For this reason, the school administrator should set goals bearing in mind the competencies of the people and those of his/her own.

School administrator should constantly be seeking to improve his/her school and to make it better than where it is. This pursuit is, of course, nothing but the school administrator's pursuit for excellence. Indeed, the efforts of the school administrator to always achieve the better in line with the expectations in the educational legislation are considered to be positive (excellence) to a certain point, but negative (perfection) after that certain point because the over perfectionism of the school administrator can start harming himself and those around him as it involves the

concern of perfectionism in addition to the effort of excellence in positive perfectionism. The perfectionism expected from the school administrator is the optimal perfectionism regarding how to make the school effective, not the over perfectionism that makes things difficult for himself and for those around him. In fact, the first step in effective schools is provided by effective administrators (Balci, 1991) but the next steps can be achieved with excellent leadership. The individual's leadership difference manifests itself as the passion for excellence (Peters & Austin, 1985). In effective schools, the school administrator can be both a good administrator and an instructional leader seeking for the best. This pursuit for the best is the reflection of his excellence.

The excellence of the school administrator may affect the decision to be given regarding education and instruction and therefore, other people and the educational process positively (Kıral, 2017). The school administrator who exhibits excellent leadership behaviors strives to make the best of the tasks regarding education and instruction together with the employees of the school; from setting the vision for the school to the school-environment relationships. He / She does this by making the employees become more productive and have better job satisfaction, and by achieving the goals of the school at the highest level. His / Her vision is not a point that will come true tomorrow immediately and that will be terminated when achieved. Continuity should be essential in vision; it should be always renewed, not terminated when achieved. Excellent leaders do the best of what they do and gain the trust of their employees. Excellent leaders keep their relationships with people intense. Indeed, this makes their leadership potential strong. The boundaries of excellent leaders are about their own competences and those of the people around them. According to Bradford and Cohen (1997), the fact that the individual tries to go beyond his competencies, it is excellence. Here the leader must seek to develop his/her own competencies and those of the people around him/her. Excellent leader must look for ways to maximize his/her own potential and that of his followers by shaping these boundaries according to himself/herself and his/her followers.

**Excellent leadership characteristics and behaviors:** Different characteristics and behaviors were put forward for excellent leadership by different researchers (Tulga, 2018; Cole, 2019; Warren, 2019 etc.). Tulga (2018) expressed that there could be such excellent leadership behaviors as (1) identifying vision, (2) understanding the work done, (3) reading the game well, (4) creating confidence, (5) improving self and employees constantly, (6) being performance-oriented, (7) valuing diversities, (8) creating a high motivation environment (9) setting high standards and etc. Cole expressed the characteristics of excellent leader as (1) the ability to learn from self and others regardless of the situation, (2) inspirational humility, (3) integrity, honesty and a strong moral compass, (4) mental calmness and flexibility under distress, (5) love, affection and the capacity of sensibility and understanding, (6) having a great vision, (7) respecting human dignity and concerning for others, (8) taking the responsibility for own actions, (9) inspiring words, actions and emotions that drive self to go beyond the limits of prejudice for others, and (10) the ability to renew self and others through story, humor, point of view and reflection (2019).

Warren mentioned the three habits of the excellent leader. These habits can be explained as follows: (1) Strong rhetoric skills that challenge, focus, support and encourage: The speech of the leader is at the center of his effectiveness in influencing others. For this reason, the ability to make speeches that produce positive results is an important habit of the leader. Each interaction produces a result either good, bad or indifferent. The speech of the leader shapes his perception. Therefore, every conversation is important and thus, should be managed in the best way. (2) Attentive listening skills that invite the input and gain insight: Listening is a very important leadership behavior used by the leader during interaction. Listening is usually a neglected communication skill. Careful listening requires time and effort but rewards the leader with richer information. It clarifies communication more. Also, it ensures that the person is respected. (3) Modeling and strengthening the right values: People observe the behaviors of leaders and take actions based on those behaviors. In general, the responsibility of the leader can vary depending on the high standards, principles and values set by the team and the organization. These three

simple habits should be at the center of the culture of a group, team and organization. Culture is largely the creation of habits by the leader. If excellent culture is desired, the leader must develop excellent habits because these habits help the leader to achieve excellence (2019).

Mack argued that excellent leadership could be achieved by strong leadership. He stated that this could be realized as follows. (1) Setting clear goals: Abstract or ambiguous goals are not enough to inspire employees. Excellent leaders should set clear and well-defined goals to make continuous progress and improve quality. (2) Communication skills: Excellent leaders should encourage their followers to perform the tasks and have effective communication skills that inspire and motivate them. Leaders should play an active role in preparing new policy initiatives and ensuring the change. (3) Challenging: Changing the status quo is always difficult. There are always people in the organization who want to continue the old practices. Excellent leaders know that total quality management is essentially a continuous revision and that no process is too good to be improved. Therefore, the excellent leader should be a challenger to overcome, change or eliminate the situations that hinder organizational growth and development. (4) Commitment to change: The fact that only a few departments of the organization direct themselves to self-improvement does not work. The organization should work together to make improvements at every stage and level. In other words, leaders should not only make improvements in just a few small areas. Leaders must be determined and willing to make changes throughout the organization. (5) Personal interest: Excellent leaders believe that it is necessary to work with their followers to develop the organization. From designing the education and instruction protocols to analyzing the results of new initiatives, leaders should be personally involved in the situations like maintaining high standards and inspiring their followers. The excellent leader should act both as a teacher and as a role model, and encourage employees to achieve higher quality standards (2019).

Tracy (2019) revealed the characteristics of the excellent leader as (1) showing extraordinary performance to achieve incredible results, (2) allowing others to perform at their best, (3) having self-confidence, (4) having effective communication skills, (5) being charismatic, (6) being goal-oriented, and (7) accepting responsibility. Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) examined excellence under eight headings as directing people, thinking strategies, leading the formation of culture, managing the resources, projects, information, quality and activities. They argued that excellent leadership is an intertwined process as the skills regarding people, the skills regarding tasks and the skills regarding thinking.

As can be seen, these studies have revealed that there can be many different excellent leadership characteristics and behaviors but they have not shown how to exhibit excellent leadership in education. School administrators have a significant place in society and have important roles and responsibilities in shaping schools. School administrators are important role models in the schools they lead. The values, commitments and ambitions of school administrators while exhibiting their behaviors are important and can affect the acquisitions of schools. School administrators are responsible for both the present and the future of children. The researches explained above have shown that leaders have a determinative impact on the quality of instruction and the achievement of students in the classroom. The leader school administrator works together with all the stakeholders for the success of the school in order to maximize the professional behaviors and practices of teachers and ensure high quality continuous professional development. The leader school administrator can reflect the standards of behavior that can serve as an example for all the stakeholders in the school climate and can establish high academic standards and expectations for the school. Furthermore, the leader school administrator can strive for excellence in the school.

In various countries, but especially in the USA and the UK, national standards of excellence have been established recently by the education departments of schools for head teachers. For example, in one of the national standards of excellence established for head teachers, the excellent leader was examined under four areas as (1) qualifications and knowledge; (2) students and employees, (3) systems and process, (4) self-improving school system and under each dimension, six

expected significant states were explained. The impact areas of the head teacher with excellent leadership are summarized below (National Standards of Excellence for Head Teachers, NSoEffH, 2015):

*Excellent leader in the impact area of qualifications and knowledge;*

- Should focus on providing first-class education for the students he serves and express clear values and moral goals explicitly.
- Should demonstrate positive attitudes and optimistic behaviors towards the students, employees, parents, governors and members of the local community, and develop good relationships.
- Should be an example leader for the people around him with his leadership behaviors, expertise and skills like integrity, creativity, flexibility and clarity.
- Should aim to maintain broad continuous professional development in order to understand and know the current education and schools in the local, national and international perspective.
- Should work with a political and economic understanding so as to transform the local and national policies into the context of the school within a clear set of principles that focuses on the school vision.
- Should create and convey the school vision in an effective way, empower all the students and employees excellently and encourage towards leadership.

*Excellent leader in the impact area of students and employees;*

- Should demand high standards for all the students and evoke a strong sense of responsibility for the employees in terms of the impact of the efforts on the outcomes of the students in order to overcome the disadvantaged situations and ensure equality.
- Should provide excellent teaching with rich curriculum opportunities and an analytical understanding of the students' well-being by analyzing the key features of successful classroom practice and curriculum design, and how students learn.
- Should establish an educational culture based on open classes in order to share the best practices, conduct relevant research and perform strong data analysis among schools.
- Should create a school atmosphere in which all the employees are motivated and supported to develop their skills and subject knowledge, and to support each other.
- Should identify the talents, current mentorship and eager leaders that emerge in a climate where excellence is the standard, and clearly plan all these for success.
- Should bring all the employees together so that they demonstrate their professional behaviors and practices.

*Excellent leader in the impact area of systems and process;*

- Should ensure that the school's systems, organization and processes are well-considered, efficient and relevant to aims, and preserve the principles of transparency, honesty and sincerity.
- Should provide a safe, quiet and well-organized environment for all the students and employees, and focus on protecting the students and improving their model behaviors in the school and in the community.

- Should establish rigorous, fair and transparent systems and take measures so as to be able to manage the performance of all the employees; identify those with poor performance and make efforts to eliminate poor performance, and support the employees to improve and evaluate excellent practices.

- Should establish a strong governance system, understand the role of the administration board and actively support the board in presenting its functions effectively, and fulfill his executive tasks, initially determining school strategy, by taking the student, employee and financial performance into consideration.

- Should make strategic financial planning taking into account the curriculum in order to ensure that all available resources are allocated in the most appropriate way for the sustainability of student success and school activities.

- Should team up the colleagues with different roles and responsibilities and make them decide by considering each other's conditions.

*Excellent leader in the impact area of self-improving school system;*

- Should establish schools facing outward, which work together with other schools and organizations – in a mutually challenging climate – in order to promote the best practices and secure excellent achievements for all the students.

- Should develop effective relationships with the colleagues and employees in other public services to improve the academic and social well-being of all the students.

- Should challenge those who strictly adhere to educational traditions to achieve excellence and the best benefit, and use research findings that are based on good evidence to establish self-regulating and self-improving schools.

- Should shape the present and future quality of the teaching profession through continuous professional development and quality training that will involve all employees.

- Should model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches based on school development, leadership and governance that ensure the vital contribution of internal and external accountability.

- Should influence and inspire the people inside and outside the school in order to ensure that young people believe in the fundamental importance of education in their lives and to increase the value of education in their eyes.

The standards of excellence mentioned above are an aid tool for school administrators. These standards can help people to trust in schools, ensure high academic standards at schools and contribute to the strengthening of the teaching profession. Together with the fact that these standards are debatable, they are open to improvement. Indeed, when school administrators act improvement-oriented as a leader during his career, these standards can support them. Self-development is the key to the development of a school administrator. These standards can help school administrators to support their development and improve their skills. Standards can be the guiding elements that can force school administrators to develop themselves, their schools and other schools. School administrators can use these standards to shape their own practices and professional development within and outside the school. These standards can provide a framework for teachers for personal development, to see what they themselves are currently doing or how far they should go to approach the situations specified in the standards (Blatchford, 2015). They can receive feedback from colleagues and parents according to these standards. School administrators can use the standards as part of supporting employees and to identify the

knowledge and skills they need in the leadership team. The standards can also serve as a starting point for setting specific goals for the next phase of the school's journey for continuous improvement, as well as for identifying the areas of development that need to be supported and improved by the school administrator (Heck & Mayor, 1993).

As can be seen, it is aimed to establish a school system that develops itself with the standards of excellence put forward and the high standards that the school administrators in charge can apply while fulfilling the tasks expected from them. Despite the fact that what is generally expected from school administrators is to fulfill the defined tasks, there is always a need for a guide to form the basis of the best practices and accordingly, the excellent leadership of the school administrator.

### **Implementation of Excellent Leadership in School**

It is revealed how excellent leadership can be applied in schools by taking into account the dimensions of structure, process, function, climate and environment in this section.

In a century when the duties of school administrators are constantly changing, they are expected to exhibit excellent leadership behaviors. They are, of course, expected to exhibit these behaviors in their area of responsibility (Willis, 1980). The school administrator should first strive to achieve the current procedures and operations within the area of duty and responsibility in the best way, with the best timing and without causing any disruptions (Erdoğan, 2003). Together with the fact that school administrators should perform the duties expected from them in terms of structure, process and function (Başaran, 2000a, 2000b; Bursalıoğlu, 2002), they should also perform these tasks in a specific climate and environment because the school organization, as a socially open system, can maintain its existence in the best way with the positive climate it creates within a certain environment. Then, the school environment and climate are also very important for the school administrators in the leadership to be performed (Kelley, Thornton & Daugherty, 2005; Mclean, 2011). For this reason, while school administrators are performing their duties, they should take into consideration the school activities regarding the structure, process, function, climate and environment. The best way for school administrators to perform these duties in such a way that influences all the stakeholders of the school may be related to their excellent leadership (Figure 1). Considering the fact that the main goal of the school is to realize instruction, achieve success and ultimately make individuals happy, it can be said that this can only be accomplished with the school administrators who are exhibiting excellent leadership and who are always in pursuit of achieving the best. It is aimed that school administrators can perform their duties in the best way for K-12 students to be successful. In order for school administrators to perform their duties in the best way, this process can discuss under the headings of structure, process, function, climate and environment.

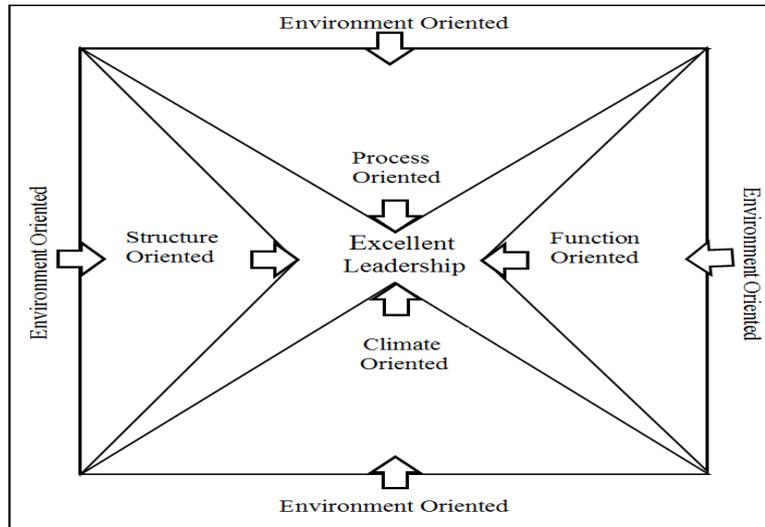


Figure 1. The Dimensions of Excellent Leadership

As shown in Figure 1, school administrators can exhibit (1) structure, (2) climate, (3) process, (4) function and (5) environment-oriented excellent leadership behaviors. These can be explained as follows:

**Structure oriented:** The structure of the school organization is composed of the tasks resulting from the division of labor and the workflow resulting from the hierarchical arrangement of these tasks (Başaran, 2000a). For this reason, the school administrator should find the person who will do this job in the best way for the tasks to be done while forming the structure of the school organization and give them authority and responsibility required for the job. He should eliminate the situations that might cut the workflow of the employees. The tasks, hierarchy and workflow that form the organizational structure of the school should be designed by the school administrator in order to be able to achieve the goals of the school in the best way. In fact, the aim of organizing at school is to create a structure that will achieve the goals expected from education at the highest level by facilitating the education process. This structure should be developed by keeping it alive against the developing technology and social needs, and should sometimes be changed to be able to influence other organizations. A flexible and systematic organizational structure to be established by the school administrator can influence the school to perform and to be managed in the best way.

In order for the school administrator to perform an effective assignment, he should analyze the quality and quantity of the task very well and know the competencies of the person to be assigned to achieve this task. An assignment that is appropriate for one employee may not be appropriate for another. The administrator should analyze this carefully and make the assignment according to the situation. The school administrator should be able to provide the resources needed by the person he appointed, as well as the authority and responsibility required for that task. Providing resources alone is not enough to do the job. The authority areas of the person who will carry out that job should also be determined and this should be announced to other employees. Thus, the position of the person will be revealed and the person will be able to perform the work flow depending on this position. Works will be done without any problems, since the determined duty areas will not be exceeded. Appropriate assignments will also be reflected in the school climate.

**Climate oriented:** The impact of the school climate on the accurate functioning of school activities is very important. The adoption of the school by the employees and the inclusion of their existing competencies such as knowledge, skills, attitudes in the activities to be carried out, as well as their moral strength at the highest level, will ensure the expected outcomes of the school to be better. The transformation of a dominant culture based on achieving the best into a value shared by the employees will also be reflected in the school's climate. The fact that all employees work together to achieve the best will ensure to complete the missing points and areas open for improvement together. In such a case, it will be ensured that the school is differentiated from other schools and improved. While the fundamental value that is based on creating excellence is expressed and communicated by the employees ensures that it is shared, the acceptance of excellence by the employees can also increase the intensity of this value. Once such a climate has been established within the school, continuing this situation can be achieved through the rewarding by the school administrator and the orientation training at school (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Luthans, 2002; Chen & Weikart, 2008; Russo, 2013).

Indeed, in order to share the same cultural values, employees are required to know what these values are and exhibit these together in their activities. The fact that the effort to achieve the best is felt by everyone at school and the collaboration and commitment of the employees will be reflected in the climate of the school to be positive (Kiral, 2008; Raman, Ling & Khalid, 2015). The perception of the positive school climate by the internal stakeholders of the school at all levels can enable them to fulfill their duties in the best way without interrupting them. The school administrator should base the positive climate in the school on values such as mutual respect, love, tolerance, justice and excellence. He should strive to fulfill all these values by always taking into consideration and be a role model for the employees. In a school where these values are adopted, employees can best fulfill education, which is the main function of the school. In a school with these values, newcomers will get used to these values over time. The school administrator can achieve the desired goals of the school at the best level by bringing the people who have adopted excellence like him together. For this, the school administrator should be able to use the management processes effectively.

**Process oriented:** The goals to be achieved within the school are achieved at the end of a certain process. In order for this process to work in the best way, the school administrator needs to know and implement the management processes. While performing the school activities, school administrators should also carry out the activities of decision-making, planning, organizing, communicating, influencing, coordinating and evaluating, which are called the management processes, in the best way (Hales, 1993). The school administrator should manage these processes by considering the stakeholders both inside and outside the school. In fact, it is among the important duties of school administrators to manage these processes in the best way to achieve the goals of the school. Management processes involve all of the activities related to working with a certain method in order for the organization's structure first, and then all the organizational activities to achieve their goals. The school administrator should be able to run the management processes effectively in order to achieve the educational goals of the school (MoNE, 1995).

The school administrator should be able to make a decision together with the school stakeholders in order to achieve the best within the means available in education. It should be able to plan how and by whom this decision will be implemented. It should make an appropriate organization to achieve the best indicated by planning. In this process, the school administrator should be able to involve all the stakeholders of the school as much as possible. It should be able to maximize communication and interaction between them. It should be able to establish an order that can ensure cooperation and harmony in order to achieve the best. At the end of the process, all stakeholders should evaluate together what they have achieved and eliminate the missing points. What needs to be done to reach new goals should be rearranged. They should be able to decide again what needs to be done to reach new goals. Each goal reached should be taken as the beginning of the journey to new heights, and this cycle should be made continuous. The school administrator has the responsibility to keep the school alive in accordance with the fundamental

aims stated in the legislation and to perform in the best way. The school administrator should also perform the functions of the school determined in the legislation at the highest level by making use of the management processes.

**Function oriented:** Functional processes in the administration of school can manifest itself in the form of the administration of the education program, student resources, human resources, general services and financial resources management, which are, in a sense, the role zones of the school administrator (Taymaz, 1995). The school administrator should make various suggestions for the improvement of the education program and strive to complete the education and instruction services, from the arrangement of annual, daily and unit-based education plans to the operation of student disciplinary works, completely. The administrator should ensure that the students in the environment of the school are enrolled in the school, transported and their health, nutrition and safety services are performed in the best possible way. While meeting the needs of education employees, planning their activities, and performing their transfers, assignments and appointments, the school administrator should do the job by looking out for the highest benefit.

The school administrator should be able to perform various activities such as equipping, maintaining and repairing the school building, coordinating the human and material resources for the effective use of educational tools and equipment, civil defense, protection, security, cleaning and public housing in the best way. Of course, in order to achieve all these, the financial resources of the school must be used appropriately without wasting. The school administrator should be able to demonstrate what, where and why he has spent with an effective budgeting. School administrators should be able to use their human resources functionally to train students in the best possible way. He / she should be able to have an understanding that can immediately put the necessary alternatives into effect in situations that will interrupt the education process. Thus, the continuity of this process can be ensured by preventing interruption of the educational process.

**Environment oriented:** An important factor affecting the school organization as much as the internal stakeholders is the school environment. The involvement of or the desire to be involved in the administration of school by the individuals and groups directly or indirectly affected by the outcome of the school such as non-governmental organizations, parents, and other schools, which constitute the environment of the school, may affect the school's climate, structure, functions and management processes. Of course, the school administrator's efforts to maximize the expected outcomes of education by benefiting from his own potential and that of all the stakeholders in order to perform the management activities mentioned by focusing on the structure, process, function, climate and environment can lead him to excellent leadership. As Haris also stated, leadership is the fact that the potentials of the employees in the organization are released and ensured to reach the summit (2002). The school administrator should be able to direct and coordinate public organizations, parents, students and education public employees around the school in accordance with the goals of the school by exhibiting excellent leadership behaviors. In order to be able to provide and maintain an effective communication flow, the school administrator should adopt himself to the people around him and keep all the communication channels open. The mastership, attitude, knowledge and enthusiasm of the school administrator in the communication process will have an impact on the success of communication (Kıral, 2017a).

The school administrator should ensure excellent educational environments so as to be able to meet the evolving and changing educational needs of the age and the environment. Based on the principle that the school is the center of cultural development and education, the school administrator should attach importance to set up effective relationships with the close environment and good cooperation with the parents. The school administrator should open up the facilities of the school to its environment and make the territory where the school is located the center of science and culture. In addition to this, the school administrator should maximize benefiting from the opportunities of the environment by the school and from the opportunities of the school by the environment for educational purposes. A school administrator who integrates

the school with its environment can make use of all the opportunities of the environment to bring the school to a better point. Of course, it should be able to make use of the facilities of the school to the extent possible. The school and the environment, which are in mutual interaction, should be able to get the most benefit from this cooperation. In order to achieve perfection, the school manager, who involves the internal stakeholders of the school as well as the external stakeholders of the school, is the architect of this cooperation.

### Conclusion

It is among the high expectations of both the individuals and institutions demanding and supplying education to manage the schools in the best way that lead the educational institutions raising intellectual capital, which is the driving force of the economy. The school administrators who are responsible for the administration of the schools supplying education should be able to meet this desire of those demanding education by trying to achieve the best in an effective and efficient manner without wasting resources such as money, human, etc. to the possible extent. The fact that the school administrator strives to achieve the best and leads the school's internal and external stakeholders accordingly may be the result of his excellent leadership. The success of school administrators who manage educational organizations, which are the driving forces of development and progress in a world where efforts have been made to achieve better especially in the recent years, depends on the excellent leadership behaviors they will exhibit.

Schools can manage the strategies of tomorrow with the excellent leaders who are constantly committed to the best in the school activities regarding its structure, process, function, climate and environment, not with the structure of today and the people of the past. In fact, in the 21st century, the schools have to force themselves to make the best use of the resources they have and to achieve the best. If they make this pushing according to their potentials, each school will have achieved their best within the scope of their opportunities. In order to achieve the best, the schools necessitate leader school administrators that have made this their philosophy of life. These school administrators can turn the school into an excellent school by exhibiting excellent leadership behaviors. The foundation of excellent leadership is based on the opportunities in hand and mutual expectations. The excellent leader should try to achieve the best with the people around him within the scope of the opportunities in hand. The most important condition for achieving it is that all the stakeholders of the school should aim to achieve the best. The pursuit of the best should be turned into a culture by the school administrator and seeking for the better should always be adopted. In fact, the higher you want to climb, the more leadership is needed (Maxwell, 1999). The type of leadership needed to climb higher can be described as excellent leadership. If the individual continuously invests in the development of excellent leadership, he can largely obtain the consequences over time. Perhaps the most important element that distinguishes the excellent leader from other leaders is his capacity to constantly develop and advance both himself and those who set out with him. Indeed, the goal is to put something on the previous day and go forward by doing a little better. The excellent leader dedicates himself to a great job and leans over backwards to achieve this. There is no loss at the end of the day because the excellent leader gets the best of he can to the possible extent at the end of the activities to which he is dedicated. Mitchell and Chingosho (2015) stated that in excellent leadership, both the leader and those who follow him will achieve the best results and acquire great gains and benefits. Becoming a strong country in the 21st century and sustaining this strength has become a necessity.

The phenomenon of excellent leadership has been opened to discussion based on the literature with this research. To understand what excellent leadership is and reveal its status in educational organizations; (1) leadership and continuous improvement; (2) perfectionism and excellence, (3) excellent leadership in educational organizations, and (4) implementation of excellent leadership in school were discussed. The place of perfect leadership as a new type of leadership within the framework of leadership and continuous improvement has been revealed based on leadership literature. Within the framework of perfectionism and excellence, it has been stated that positive

perfectionism is a phenomenon that makes people's lives better. It has been argued that the concept of excellence in excellent leadership actually corresponds to positive perfectionism. Excellent leadership is the process of influencing people in accordance with the vision he has created through the filter of values on the path to achieve the best. In this process, in the light of the positive perfectionism theory, the excellent leader should be able to exhibit self oriented excellent leadership, others oriented excellent leadership and socially oriented excellent leadership. Shortly, excellent leadership can be defined as the effort of the individual to achieve continuously the high performance standards created by the individual for himself/herself and others, and by others for the individual. The best place to follow this process is the school and therefore, it is important to determine the excellent leadership behaviors of school administrators. Within the framework of excellence in educational organizations; it was discussed that educational organizations should always have an understanding aiming at excellent. The stages that educational organizations have reached so far have been presented based on effective school, school development and effective administrators who manage these schools. It has been underlined that this continuous search for better is essentially the pursuit of excellent. It has been stated that this constant pursuit of excellence can be achieved through leaders who have excellent leadership understanding and demonstrate this with their behavior. It has been demonstrated that excellent practices in schools can be achieved with the excellent leadership model. It has been stated that this can only be achieved with excellent leaders who take leadership within the framework of themselves, others and socially oriented excellence. It has been demonstrated that these leaders can achieve the best in school by considering the structure, process, function, climate and environment.

The issue of excellent leadership in management has been discussed for the first time in this research. Although the phenomenon of perfect leadership has been opened to discussion in the education literature with this research, there is a need for researches supporting the theoretical work. Researchers can investigate, based on the structure, process, function, climate and environment, on a practical basis, what kind of excellent leadership behaviors school principals exhibit at school. As explained above, schools are living organisms that are composed of the components of structure, process, function, climate and environmental. Only excellent leaders can make these living organisms excellent.

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