Uncovering Teachers’ Implicit Leadership Theories for School Administrators: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study attempted to expand the existing knowledge regarding school administrators’ effective and ineffective leadership behaviours and traits based on the perceptions of teacher respondents.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The basic interpretive qualitative approach was adopted to scrutinize and discover the cultural attributions of the participating teachers. Research data were collected from 64 teachers working at a metropolitan city centre in mid-western Turkey. The respondents were asked to list the effective and ineffective characteristics of a school leader.

**Findings:** A total of 379 expressions (249 effective, 130 ineffective) defining leader behaviours and traits were obtained. On average, there were 5.92 (SD: 2.06; min.=2, max.=9) expressions per participating teacher. We found seven effective leader behavioural themes with a total of 38 leader attributes and five ineffective leader behavioural themes with 27 leader attributes.

**Implications/Originality/Value:** A seven-themed taxonomy of educational leadership behaviours was created. The results implied that communication skills and being an expert in the post are crucial as highlighted both by effective and ineffective leader attributes. The paper was concluded by offering some implications.

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**Introduction**

Leadership was not a complicated construct for a long time during the 20th century. The researchers have dealt with many distinct forms and properties of leadership (Van Fleet & Yukl, 1989; Yukl, 2012). Historically, various leadership theories were developed, and different approaches were adopted like great
man, contingency, and reciprocity (Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 2007). A substantial body of research is also available to explain leadership at schools (Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018). They have focused on school leader behaviours, leadership styles, and levels (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; 2019; Northouse, 2018; Yukl, 2012) along with the effects of school leadership on teacher performance, school conditions, and student achievement (Nettles & Heerington, 2007). Innate and more comprehensive analyses of leadership play an important role in surfacing effective leadership practices. Distinguishing leaders from non-leaders has been a traditional challenge in leadership research and especially for implicit leadership theories (ILT) (Epitropaki, Martin, Tram-Quon & Topakas, 2013; Jiang, Xu, Houghton & Manz, 2019).

ILTs are similar to personality theories suggesting differences in the core beliefs of individuals about human attributes (Burnette, Pollack & Hoyt, 2010, p. 53). As constructions of individuals, ILTs are cognitive structures or prototypes revealing the traits and abilities of leaders. Epitropaki et al. (2013, p. 870) claimed that “leader traits and characteristics may distinguish leaders from non-leaders and the basic level contextualized prototypes may distinguish different types of leaders”. In contrast to a great many studies on ILT in business leadership, school leadership literature contains those only in limited numbers. Moreover, they are largely but not exclusively based on Western countries and organizations other than schools. Finally, few qualitative studies are available for both leadership and ILT in educational settings. The purpose of this study was to explore effective leader attributes of school principal leadership in a non-Western country.

Concerning ILT research in various cultures and samples, Lord, Foti & De Vader (1984) found 59 attributes and categorized them under prototypic vs anti-prototypic dimensions on a study of US undergraduate students. Offerman, Kennedy & Wirtz (1994) defined eight dimensions of ILTs in which sensitivity, dedication, tyranny, intelligence, strength, and charisma were prototypic, and attractiveness and masculinity were anti-prototypic in US undergraduates. Epitropaki & Martin (2004) listed six dimensions of ILT in Britain. The prototypic dimensions were sensitivity, dedication, intelligence, and dynamism while the anti-prototypic ones were tyranny and masculinity. Synch & Shillings (2011) identified 15 categories of effective and ineffective leaders in the Netherlands. Their traits were team player, organized, communicative, unpleasant, disinterested, and weak. Greenhalgh & Maxwell (2019) analysed 8,283 (62% male, 75% US, and 25% international) business undergraduate student images for 16 years with linguistic and stylistic images and essays in the US. They concluded that male and female students considered leadership action as mainly transformational, empowering, and uplifting.

Lord, Epitropaki, Foti & Hansbrough (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of implicit leadership theories. A study by House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman (2002) under the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program classified the following six global cultural ILTs under the dimensions of charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, self-protective, participative, humane, and autonomous. The first two were universal while the rest were culturally sensitive. As succinctly stated by Judge, Piccole & Kosalka (2009, p. 861) “because leadership is inherently collectivistic and therefore dependent on the construal of others, one might well make the argument that reputation is at least as important to leadership as identity”. Lord, Foti & De Vader (1984) argued that ILT leadership perceptions are influenced by the individuals’ implicit leadership theories. An individual emerges as an effective leader if trait expressions and behaviours are appreciated as the leaders’ prototype. The researchers found that family resemblance scores, cue validity scores, and prototypical ratings were strongly correlated. Lord et al. (1984, p. 375) concluded that “leadership might be best described as a ‘person-in-situation’ category, leadership perceptions need to be more thoroughly researched, and contrary to the conventional approaches, traits should predict leadership perceptions in many situations”.

Leaders are responsible both for the failure and success of organizations, and school leaders are non-exempt from the rule of thumb. Instructional leadership in education has been of concern to numerous researchers for over three decades (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The instructional leadership role of a
principal includes defining the school’s mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Bush & Glover (2014) reviewed school leadership models and came up with three working definitions of leadership: leadership as an influence, leadership and values, and leadership as a vision. They identified nine theories of leadership. Although they did not consider ILT explicitly, it seems that they classified it among the contingent leadership theories.

An effective principal is believed to be a prerequisite for an effective school (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2004). Lezotte (2001) underlined that the principals of effective schools act as instructional leaders and communicate the mission of the school effectively and persistently to staff, students, and parents. Cuban (1988) concluded that an effective school leader must balance the instructional, political, and managerial roles. Research findings pointed to the clear impact of school principals’ leadership traits on student outcomes (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006).

**Research Methodology**

As a multidimensional and dynamic concept with symbolic components, leadership is appropriate for qualitative research methodology (Conger, 1998). The basic interpretive research design was used in the study. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016: 23-25), the basic interpretive design attempts to “understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences”. Therefore, qualitative researchers should be interested in “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” in conducting a basic qualitative study. Though this is the basis of all qualitative research, it is accompanied by additional dimensions in other qualitative strategies. Basic interpretive qualitative research is an inductive research strategy that exploits such data as interviews, observations, or document analysis and data analysis involves identifying recurring patterns or themes. As can be understood, the basic interpretive design includes collecting and interpreting information on a topic under investigation without relying on any philosophy.

**Participants**

The respondents were 64 teachers (42 females, 22 males) working at various public schools (primary, secondary and high schools) in a metropolitan city centre in mid-western Turkey. Teachers were contacted through e-mails whether they would be interested in a study on leadership. 73 respondents were sent a letter explaining the purpose of the research as they accepted the invitation. 64 teachers agreed to participate. Their mean age was 36.6 years (SD=7.8, min.=24, max.=55), and their subject areas were quite diverse: primary school teachers (n=20, 31%), English language teaching (n=9, 14%), social sciences (n=6, 9%), and a variety of disciplines (n=29, 46%).

**Procedure**

We provided the teachers with an instrument explaining the rationale of the study and they were asked not to submit any personal information except their age, school, and subject area. Teachers were requested to imagine a school administrator whom they consider as a leader, with whom they are currently working or with whom they have worked before, or whom they just know about and to label effective and ineffective characteristics of that leader. The respondents were assured of confidentiality.

After the transcription procedure, research data was analysed through content analysis as opposed by (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The researchers encoded the expressions independently, and they held a meeting to reach a consensus. Five expressions were not included in the categorization as the researchers were unable to reach an agreement due to ambiguousness. Based on Campbell, Quincy & Osserman (2013), the number of coding agreements was divided to calculate the level of inter-coder reliability, which turned out to be 93%. Once theoretical categories were developed, the opposite of an emerging category was also created. Constructing opposing categories to describe personal images was explained by Bannister & Fransella’s (2003) *Personal Constructs Theory* and used by various researchers (Schyns & Schilling, 2011).
Two faculty members external to the study reviewed the coding. Moreover, a group of 10 teachers was asked to scrutinize the results for a credibility check. Finally, all the expressions, categories, and subcategories were re-examined to uncover any doubt or disagreement. We also performed descriptive analyses to investigate the qualitative data further. Error sources, such as the researcher bias, might have prevented researchers from reaching tangible results. Determining the frequency of expressions might have prevented the emphasizing of a category or dropping another off the radar. Saldana (2016, p. 26) pointed out that “just as codes are symbolic summaries of larger excerpts of data, numbers are symbolic summaries of a measured outcome.”

**Findings**

Data analysis yielded a total of 379 expressions emerged, 249 of which for effective principal behaviours and 130 ineffective ones. On average, there were 5.92 (SD: 2.06; min.=2, max.=9) expressions per participating teacher. The traits for relationship (82) theme included “communicative (21), valuing (20), responsive (10), peacemaker (9), respective (7), empathetic (5), appreciative (3), social (3), sincere (2), and eloquent (2)”. Positive traits for the change-oriented (62) theme were “knowledgeable (12), devoted (11), goal-oriented (8), determined (7), intelligent (7), enactor (6), hardworking (5), organized (4), and experienced (2)”. Those for the task-oriented (46) theme were “equitable (17), democratic (11), trustworthy (7), honest (5), impartial (4), and consistent (2)”. The authority-type (19) theme included “administrative (8), authoritarian (7), bureaucratic (3), disciplined (1)”, and being-innovative (19) theme did “innovative (10), entrepreneur (5), and visionary (4)”. The least frequently referred themes for effective traits were “personal psychological traits (11) including “charismatic (4), cool (4), good-looking (2), charming (1)”, and being cooperative and approachable (10), that is, “cooperative (8) and approachable (2)”.

| Table 1. Themes, attributes, and illustrative quotes |
|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Themes/Attributes | Effective leader | Illustrative quotes | Ineffective leader | Illustrative quotes |
| Relationships (82) | “Establishes cordial”, “sincere communication” | Relationships (36) | “selfish”, “not appreciative” |
| “Communicative” (21) | | “not communicates” (15) | |
| Change (62) | “Mastery on subjects” | Change (39) | “know-all”, “narrow-minded” |
| “Knowledgeable” (12) | | “Inadequate” (14) | |
| Task (46) | “Have a vision”, “Plans and carries out the plans” | Task (32) | “unorganized”, “fails to act” |
| “Equitable” (17) | | “Tyrant” (7) | |
| Authority Type (19) | “Should spend more time in school” “Authoritarian” | Authority Type (15) | “strict disciplined”, |
| “administrative” (8) | | “lacks authority” (8) | “tyrant” |
| Innovative (19) | “Innovative”, “Open to innovation” | Narrow-minded (8) | “fails to take initiative” |
| “Innovative” (10) | | “Fears to do something” (3) | |
| Personal (11) | “Charismatic” | | |
| “charismatic” (4) | | | |
| Cooperative and approachable (10) | | “Cooperates” | |
| “Cooperative” (8) | | | |

In the ineffective-leadership category, positive traits on the relationship-oriented theme were followed by negative traits under a similar theme. Negative traits in the relationship theme (36) were “not being communicative (15), not appreciative (6), know-it-all (5), insincere (4), stressful (4), emotional (1), and quarrelsome (1)”’. The most referred ineffective-trait category was the change oriented category (39) including “inadequate (14), do-nothing (9), unorganized (6), unconcerned (5), impatient (2), forgetful (1), awkward (1), and ignorant (1)”’. Ineffective traits for the task-oriented (32) theme were “tyrant (7), selfish (7), not impartial (6), unfair (5), not trustworthy (4), and inconsistent (3)”’. Negative traits for the authority-type (15) theme comprised “lack of authority (8), over-disciplined (6), rather administrative (1)”, and those for narrow-mindedness (8) did “fearful of doing something (3), not taking initiative (3), and narrow-minded (2)”.

When taking all the themes into account, communication was highlighted from both directions. We considered some other traits that were possibly related to communication, but we found them to be more
suitable for other themes (e.g., humoristic). Secondly, being an expert in the post was overemphasized by such traits as knowledgeable, goal-oriented, inadequate, unorganized. One more point was that some expressions had both effective and ineffective connotations. To illustrate, a disciplined trait in the authority-type theme was shown among the effective traits and behaviours by one participant, six of them suggested that disciplined or over-disciplined was. Likewise, the authority-type was accepted to be effective by one participant and ineffective (rather administrative) by eight of them. The themes and attributes were organized within categories of effective and categories of ineffective leader attributes. The effective categories with their respective themes and attributes were summarized in Table 2.

| Relationship Oriented | Change Oriented | Task Oriented | Authority Type | Being Innovative | Personal Characteristics | Cooperative and Approachable |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Communicative d       | Knowledgeable e | Equitable a, d| Administrative +| Innovative e     | Charismatic a, b, c, d, e| Cooperative                  |
| Valuing               | Intelligent a, b, c, d| Democratic | Authoritarian +| Entrepreneur | Cool +                   | Approachable                |
| Responsive            | Devoted d*      | Trustworthy d | Bureaucratic + | Visionary e     | Good-looking +           |                             |
| Peacemaker            | Experienced b, c, d | Honest e      | Disciplined d  |                  | Charming +               |                             |
| Respectful d, e       | Enactor +       | Impartial     |                |                  |                          |                             |
| Empathic e            | Goal-oriented a, b, d | Consistent d|                |                  |                          |                             |
| Appreciative          | Determined      |               |                |                  |                          |                             |
| Social                | Hard-working    |               |                |                  |                          |                             |
| Sincere b, c, d       | Organized       |               |                |                  |                          |                             |
| Eloquent              |                 |               |                |                  |                          |                             |

Note: The newly discovered leader attributes are accompanied by +.
a. The same themes or attributes appear in Lord et al.’s (1984) categories.
b. The same themes or attributes appear in Offerman et al.’s (1994) categories.
c. The same themes or attributes appear in Epitropaki & Martin’s (2004) categories.
d. The same themes or attributes appear in Jiang et al.’s (2019) categories d*. Similar themes or attributes appear in any of the above-cited studies.
e. The same themes or attributes appear in Moral et al. (2018).
f. The same themes or attributes appear in Yukl (2012).
One that did not emerge in our study nor did they find: creative

A “theme” represents a broad characteristic of educational leaders and an “attribute” is a more specific leader descriptor for a given theme. Themes and attributes were organized within two large “categories” of effective and ineffective leader behaviours. There were seven themes indicating characteristics of school leaders’ relationships, change, task orientation, authority type, being innovative, personal characteristics, and being cooperative and approachable. The relationship-oriented theme included ten behaviours: communicative, valuing, responsive, peacemaker, respectful, empathetic, appreciative, social, sincere, and eloquent. We created change-oriented based on the following behaviours: knowledgeable, devoted, goal oriented, determined, intelligent, enactor, hardworking, organized, and experienced. We came up with a task-oriented theme including equitable, democratic, trustworthy, honest, impartial, consistent. We attributed an authority type based on administrative, authority, bureaucratic, and disciplined. Personal and psychological traits theme consisted of being charismatic, cool, good-looking, and charming. Finally, being cooperative and approachable happen to be the last theme revealed in our study.

| Relationships Oriented | Change Oriented | Task Oriented | Authority Type | Personal Characteristics |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------------|

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Table 3 summarized ineffective school principals’ leadership orientations with the following five themes: “relationship-oriented, change-oriented, task-oriented, authority-type, and personal”. The relationship-oriented behaviours included the behaviours of “not communicative, not appreciative, know-it-all, insincere, stressful, emotional, quarrelsome”. The change-oriented behaviours comprised “inadequate, do-nothing, unorganized, unconcerned, impatient, forgetful, awkward, and ignorant”. Ineffective behaviours for task orientation were “tyrant, selfish, not impartial, unfair, not trustworthy, inconsistent”. Ineffective authority type behaviours were “lack of authority, over-disciplined, rather administrative”. Ineffective personal characteristics included “fearful of doing something, not taking initiative, and narrow-minded”.

Conclusions, Discussion & Recommendations

This study adopted an innovative approach in four ways aligned with the principal leadership literature. The first was a basic interpretive approach to scrutinize and discover the cultural attributions of the participants. It may widen the understanding of educational leadership by revealing how Turkish teachers construct and what they attribute the notion of effective school administrators based on their experiences. The second was being among the pioneers that took an ILT approach to principal leadership. The third was an attempt to clarify teacher perceptions regarding effective principal leadership behaviours. Our analyses revealed 16 familiar and 21 unfamiliar effective principal leader attributes along with the ineffective ones. The fourth was to provide a humble cross-cultural comparison between Western and non-Western cultures.

We found seven effective leader-behaviour themes with a total of 38 leader attributes and five ineffective leader-behaviour themes with 27 leader-behaviour attributes. Following a literature review on effective leadership behaviours, Yukl (2012) found 15 specific component behaviours under four meta-categories. Our findings are quite similar to Yukl’s first three meta-categories entitled the relationship-oriented, task-oriented, and change-oriented. However, our findings differed from Yukl’s findings in his fourth meta-category entitled external leadership behaviours representing the boundary-spanning behaviours of leaders. We named our fourth category the authority-type (administrative, bureaucratic, authoritarian, disciplined, and approachable), and it is more directed toward the inside of an organization. If we consider this category as boundary-spanning activities in education like Yukl’s perspective, the content of his external leadership behaviours meta-category and our theme of authority-type become similar. School administrators act as boundary spanners when they attempt to buffer their schools from the effects of the environment. School leaders also try to bridge their schools with their environments to get resources, gain legitimacy, and improve the image of their schools (Goldring, 1990). As public officials, school leaders use different types of authority like Yukl’s (2012) external leadership behaviours meta-category. Additionally, our fifth theme may point out cultural differences as personal characteristics (charismatic, cool, good-looking, and charming).

Although the cultures and disciplines were quite different, our findings are comparable to the study by Jiang et al. (2019: 681-683). They found a total of eight themes by organizing effective and ineffective categories of leadership behaviours. Their effective leader themes were “competent, distinguished, dynamic, helpful, social-skilled, and ethical” and the ineffective ones were “destructive and powerful”. Jiang et al.’s (2019) competent and social-skilled themes were quite similar to our relationship-oriented theme while their distinguished and dynamic themes resemble our task-oriented theme. Their dynamic theme corresponds to
our change-oriented theme. Our task-oriented theme also has a relationship with their ethical theme.

Most of the attributes in this study were also mentioned in other studies. For example, intelligent and charismatic attributes in the present study were found in Epitropaki & Martin (2004), Jiang et al. (2019), Lord et al. (1984), Offerman et al. (1994), and sincere, knowledgeable, and experienced were identified in Offerman et al. (1994), Epitropaki & Martin (2004), and Jiang et al. (2019). The goal-oriented theme was obtained in Lord et al. (1984), Offerman et al. (1994), and Jiang et al. (2019). Equitable was determined in Lord et al. (1984) and Jiang et al. (2019). Communicative, respectful, devoted, visionary, trustworthy, consistent, cooperative, and disciplined were established in Jiang et al. (2019). Finally, respectful, emphatic visionary, equitable, honest, determined, and charismatic were discovered in Moral, Martín-Romera, Martínez-Valdivia, & Olmo-Extremera (2018). The findings of this study support Den Hartog, House, Hanges & Ruiz-Quintanill’s (1999) assertion that specific aspects of charismatic leadership are universal across cultures.

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins (2006; 24) yielded that core practices of successful school leadership were essential: “commitment and resilience, passion, and understanding”. In a follow-up study, Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008) reviewed the literature for evidence that supported school leadership. They indicated that “almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices” (p. 27). They presented four core successful leadership practices (p. 30): “building a vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program”. In their follow up study a decade later, Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2019) argued that the personal leadership resources (cognitive, social, and psychological resources) were likely to be more useful than the qualities and traits, such as optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity to select, evaluate and develop leaders. Their seventh claim referred to traits, and the authors revised it as follows: “While further research is required, a well-defined set of cognitive, social and psychological ‘personal leadership resources’ shows promise of explaining a high proportion of variation in the practices enacted by school leaders” (p.11). Leithwood et al. (2019) analysed the evidence and concluded that their claims were evidence-supported and confirmed with a few minor exceptions.

When we focused on highly desirable effective leadership behaviours and traits, relationship-oriented skills emerged as the leading aspect of effective school leaders in Turkey. Subsequently, traits about task orientation were established to be another significant aspect of effective leadership. Being fair to teachers and being trustworthy, authoritarian, innovative, charismatic, and open to cooperation were other traits mentioned by participants. In terms of the ideal leader prototype, the communication dimension as the foremost aspect of an effective leader seemed to be supported by other research findings (Berber & Rofcanin, 2012; Offermann et al., 1994; Schyns & Schilling, 2011). In parallel with research findings highlighting communication for effective leadership, our research revealed that communication skills were the most frequently addressed effective leadership trait. We can conclude an ideal instructional leadership model should comprise a good communicator, a management expert, trustworthy, authoritarian (dominant), visionary, having a good image and personality, and being open to cooperating with other stakeholders.

Our findings exhibited the prevalent prototype of effective instructional leaders from teachers’ point of view. Studies aimed to define traits and behaviours associated with leadership (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2007; Toduk Akiş, 2004). In search of a general leader prototype in the Turkish context, Kabasakal & Bodur (2007) defined decisive, team integrator, autocratic, diplomatic, and visionary as prominent traits of the Turkish leader profile. In her extensive research on Turkish leadership style and leadership perceptions, Toduk Akiş (2004) examined the leadership context in Turkey covering a wide variety of disciplines. She concluded that the 21st century leaders in Turkey must be a person of trust. She highlighted ‘trust’ as the sole factor in leadership in the Turkish context and defined a ‘trust environment’ as the basis for leadership. She further explained that the trust environment was characterized by being just, trusted, consistent, and having confidence in followers. It was in a mutual relationship with open communication by creating the
ideal-leader prism of leadership. Our findings also pointed out the importance of ‘trust’ for an individual to be perceived as a leader. Although the classification schemes differed, many of our subcategories addressed either a component of the trust dimension or the communication dimension of the suggested leadership prism. This, in turn, highlighted that the leadership model for the Turkish context corroborated the leadership model of the Turkish teachers.

Okutan (2014) concluded that school administrators in Turkey exhibited traditional managerial behaviours and they were not particularly competent in human relationships, motivation, and organization, the involvement of concerned parties, or in being fair and impartial. Positive traits related to interpersonal relationships (good communicator, valuing, sensitive) were some of the most frequently addressed leader traits in our research as well. Gurbuz, Erdem & Yildirim (2013) also specified effective communication skills among the foremost characteristics of effective school principals. Halawah (2005) suggested that the more school administrators display effective communication skills, the more positive school climate emerges. From a different point of view, the ineffective traits and behaviours (lack of communication, unappreciative, etc.) of school leaders also highlighted the communicative abilities. It was noteworthy for the participating teachers to claim that principals’ social communication skills were the major reason for ineffective school leadership.

Another salient finding was about the positive (knowledgeable, devoted, etc.) and negative (inadequate, etc.) traits and behaviours related to the task-oriented theme. This theme was the second most frequently addressed one (N=101, 26.55%). The instructional leadership model of Hallinger & Murphy (1985) suggested that the management of the instructional program was among three dimensions of instructional leadership. As indicated by our findings, the second most frequently addressed category was task-oriented which was also about the successful management of the school and the instructional program. Thus, it can be alleged that our findings were consistent with Hallinger & Murphy’s instructional leadership model.

Another interesting finding of our research probably emerged from the jurisdictions and liabilities of school administrators and the teacher induction system in Turkey. Traits and behaviours related to the distribution of power (equitable, democratic, trustworthy, honest, etc.) category were the third most frequently referred one. Combining effective and ineffective traits and behaviours, this category was reiterated 78 times (20.58%) and found to contribute to instructional leadership perception to a great extent. We can conclude that the school system in this part of Turkey may be limiting school administrators’ taking initiative, and thus, the leadership expectations from school administrators may decrease whereas the fair management expectation was high. The category related to management mechanisms had a relatively high frequency (N=34, 8.97%) which may be considered another piece of evidence. Arguably, the selection mechanism of school administrators, performance evaluation criteria, and mutual responsibilities of teachers and principals may be influential in Turkey. While being authoritarian could be regarded as an effective leadership trait, lack of authority was found to be an ineffective one. It purports that effective school leaders in Turkey were expected to be authoritarian, which in turn suggested that an authoritarian leadership style was widely adopted in the Turkish school context (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). It is noteworthy to draw attention to being open to cooperation and innovation as the least mentioned effective category (N=10, 2.64%). On the contrary, defining an ineffective leadership prototype based on teachers’ expressions includes a poor communicator, inability to meet job requirements (inadequate), distrusted, failing to establish authority, tyrant, fearful of doing something, and narrow-minded.

The findings of the present study suggested that communication skills and expertise are the salient characteristics. Thus, it is a must to hire school administrators based on pre-service and in-service training to improve their leadership skills. The literature is in need of extensive studies adopting divergent theoretical frameworks to determine teacher/follower perceptions of leadership. The existing body of evidence implies that a universal set of leadership traits and behaviours has yielded mixed results. Therefore, it could be suggested to select and train school leaders depending on the followers’ expectations, especially in the Turkish context. ILT may serve as fertile soil. For examining school leadership,
international studies are needed through qualitative methodologies and various theoretical lenses, such as ILT.

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