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## **A Study on Teachers' Perceptions of Organizational Identity in terms of Learning School**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of organizational identity in terms of learning school. The data collection of the research consists of a total of 370 teachers who are chosen by random cluster sampling from teachers working in public schools in Konya in 2016. Organizational Identity Perception Scale and Learning School Scale were used to collect data in this research. Data were analyzed by statistical methods. According to findings of the research, there is a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of organizational identity and schools' quality of being learning school. It is seen that there is a positive significant relationship between identification, goal value sharing, communication, image sub dimensions of teachers organizational identity and team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school.

**Key words:** Teachers, Organizational Identity, Learning School.

### **Introduction**

Every teacher has a different idea about the features of their school from their perspective. Thus, it can be said that each of the teachers working in primary schools has a different perception of identity for their schools. Collective behaviors of individuals at the organizational level relate with how the organizational identity is seen by the member of organization. This means the identity guides in the formation of behaviors. The organization joins to the environment, responds and interprets consistent with the identity (Sethi and Compea, 2002; cited in Tüzün, 2006: 48-49). For this reason, teachers' perceptions of organizational identity has been an important subject of study in recent years. Organizational identity is an improved metaphor to discuss and analyze how individuals in the organization perceive their organizations, what they feel for the organization and what they think. Organization identity consists of the visual elements such as the logo, colors and emblem of the organization with organizational communication, organizational behavior and organizational philosophy. An organization-specific format use of these elements constitute the organization identity of the organization (Cobanoğlu, 2008).

Organizational identity is related with what the individuals perceive, what they feel and what they think regarding their organizations (Hatch and Schultz, 1997). How's that for an individual, identity is a set of meanings and beliefs responding to questions "who am I?", the answer to the question "Who are we?" is an organizational identity for an organization (Foreman and the Whetten, 2002). Individual identity is perception of people as "who they are" and the organizational identity is what the individuals think about their organizations. Organizational identity is a concept that demonstrates the core features of the organization in the eyes of workers, describing what does not change in the organization in the processes of change and making an organization different, special and unique from other organizations in the eyes of workers (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Organization identity allows members to identify themselves with the organization. However, the following is required for the realization of this ideal situation (Erdem, 1996: 53; cited in Cansu, 2006: 25): be perceived of the organization identity by the workers, workers' strength of the relationship with

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the organization, satisfaction of the workers' large parts of desires through the organizational framework and be at a minimum level of the competition between members of the organization.

Organizational identity perception is the degree of similarity between the concepts of individual employees as they define themselves and the concepts of they define the organization (Ertürk, 2003). The stronger employees have a sense of organizational identity, the stronger integration of organization they have (Hündür, 2006). Organizational identity creates a psychological bond between employees and organizations, allows coordination. This increases employees' interpersonal trust and the sense of collaboration, motivates the achievement of organizational goals (Tüzün and Çağlar, 2008).

Organizational identity is closely related with good or bad tasks of individuals determining the school's success or failure (Blackmore, 2004). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) concluded in a study that the members of the organization had responses consistently with their perceiving the organizational identity. Similarly, the teachers adopting the identity of learning school can be expected to engage in a consistent and coherent response with these perceptions. Educational institutions' being learning schools can be considered to have an impact on the levels of organizational identity perception of the teachers who work in schools.

In the information society, schools should return not only be teaching institutions but also be learning institutions as education organization. In this society learning by living, learning to learn, responsibility of self-education and lifelong learning stands out as the fundamental values. Schools' adapting to this development will be proportional to the transition speed to be learning school (Töremen, 2001). Educational institutions look for ways to gain competitiveness, to increase efficiency and productivity in a competitive environment imposed by today's society. Therefore, schools should follow the changes in their environment and must adapt to these changes. The only way for that is turning into learning organizations with abandoning the traditional understanding of school education (Jokic, Cosic, Sajfert, Pečujlj and Pardanjac, 2012). The way schools can keep pace with the rapid changes and fulfill the requirements of information community will accelerate the adoption of learning school approach. The school will provide the change in the society as a learning school. Learning schools are aiming to learn together.

Learning schools are expressed as being adopted in principle constantly with developing of human resources, the development of staff is at the forefront, being encouraged to learn and self-renewal by learning, learning is the basis to change, being considered to be teachers as colleagues and the learning climate supported by staff (Töremen, 2001). Learning School is described that leadership is supportive, decisions are shared, there is a common vision and values, the appropriate learning culture is settled for continuous learning, personal applications are shared and schools that have teams working in cooperation (Carpenter, 2008: 25).

School of the future is a learning school. Learning school will have a unique structure in accordance with the system approach, a management with teamwork in accordance with the contingency theory, an autonomous operation which eliminates bureaucracy for an education process approaching zero defects. Learning schools will try continuous self-recognition, to benefit from the experience, to renew itself with taking into account the internal and external environmental conditions and taking feedback continuously. For this, learning school will make the scientific information instantly accessible when needed by establishing an information and communication systems and will train constantly studying employees (Basaran, 2000: 31). There is no distinction between teachers and learners in learning schools. Everybody is learners from the school principal to unqualified employees, the students and the parents. School achieves thanks to know capturing the change, learning self-renewal and being contemporary (Özus 2005: 24).

General disciplines of learning organizations are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning in (Senge, 2002). These disciplines can be explained as follows (İstar, 2006):

- Personal mastery encourages our personal motives for learning how our actions affect our world constantly.
- Creating a Shared Vision encourages attachment to the long-term.
- Mind model provides the necessary clearance for us to manifest inadequacies of the current way of view to our world.
- Team learning develops skills ability to see the big picture lies beyond the individual perspective of human groups.

This research is based on the interaction between the variables of learning school with organizational identity perception of the teachers tried to explain above. The aim of this research is to analyze the properties of learning school in terms of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity. As part of this aim the following questions will be answered:

1. Is there a significant relationship between identification, goal value sharing, communication, image sub dimensions of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity and team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school?
2. What level do team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school explain variability in the identification dimension of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity?
3. What level do team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school explain variability in the goal value sharing dimension of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity?
4. What level do team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school explain variability in the communication dimension of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity?
5. What level do team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery sub-dimensions of learning school explain variability in the image dimension of teachers' perceptions of organizational identity?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

In this study, the relational survey model was adopted. In the study teachers' perceptions of organizational identity were analyzed in terms of the properties of learning school. The dependent variable of the study is teachers' perceptions of organizational identity and the independent variable of the study is the characteristics of learning school.

### **Study group**

The study group of the research consists of a total of 370 teachers who are chosen by random cluster sampling from teachers working in public schools in Konya in 2016. Approximately 53% of teachers are men and 47% are women. Also approximately 34% of teachers are single and 66% are married.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study, Organizational Identity Scale was used to measure teachers' perceptions of organizational identity and Learning School Scale was used to measure the characteristics of learning school. Information on the Scales are given below. Organizational Identity Perception Scale developed by Tasdan (2013) was used to teachers' measure perceptions of organizational identity. Scale organized according to the technical point Likert consists of 48 items and 4 sizes. In the analysis of the reliability of the first factor Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was .97; the second factor was .94; the third factor was .95, and the fourth factor was found .94. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient related with the general scale was identified as .98. Cronbach's alba coefficient of organizational identity scale of the study group was found to be .97.

Learning School Scale developed by Uğurlu, Doğan and Yiğit (2014) was used to to measure the level of being a learning school in which teachers work. The Likert-type scale consists of 20 items and 4-factors and can be said to be a valid and reliable scale. The total value of the reliability of the scale was found to be .92. Cronbach's coefficient of Alba of Learning School Scale in the study group was found to be .95.

## Data Analysis

The significance of the relationship between characteristics of learning school and teachers' organizational identities was tested with Pearson moment products correlation coefficients. Learning school characteristics' level of explaining in a meaningful way into teachers' organizational identities was tested by multiple regression technique. The significance level of 0.05 was adopted to analyze the data.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings and comments of the statistical analysis of the results of the research done on the sub-problems are given.

Table 1. Correlation between learning organization and organizational identity

		Learning school				
		Team learning	Mental models	Shared vision	Personal mastery	
Organizational identity	Identification	r	,635**	,603**	,607**	,368**
		p	,000	,000	,000	,000
	Goal value sharing	r	,656**	,607**	,710**	,583**
		p	,000	,000	,000	,000
	Communication	r	,561**	,644**	,659**	,503**
		p	,000	,000	,000	,000
	Image	r	,557**	,647**	,664**	,496**
		p	,000	,000	,000	,000

p < .05

As shown in Table 1. , It is seen that there is a positive significant relationship between identification, goal value sharing, communication, image dimensions of teachers' organizational identity and team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery dimensions of learning school.

Explanatory power of the dimensions of learning school to the variability in the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity was tested by multiple regression, results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression level on the dimensions of learning school into the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity

The independent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	Dimensions of Learning school	β	t	p
Learning school	0.493	88,44	0,000	Team learning	,35	6,49	0,000
				Mental models	,22	3,98	0,000
				Shared vision	,26	4,31	0,000
				Personal mastery	-,08	-1,65	0,098

The dependent variable: " Identification " dimension of organizational identity.

p < .05

Schools' learning school property describes 49. 3% of the variability in identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, team learning, mental models and shared vision dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity, but personal mastery dimension doesn't describe the variability in the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity (p < .05).

Table 3. Regression level on the dimensions of learning school into the goal value sharing dimension of teachers' organizational identity

The independent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	Dimensions of Learning school	β	t	p
Learning school	0.561	132,003	0,000	Team learning	,23	4,74	0,000
				Mental models	,15	3,09	0,002
				Shared vision	,33	5,93	0,000
				Personal mastery	,18	4,23	0,000
The dependent variable: " Goal value sharing " dimension of organizational identity.							
p < .05							

Schools' learning school property describes 56. 1% of the variability in goal value sharing dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, team learning, mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the goal value sharing dimension of teachers' organizational identity (p < .05).

Table 4. Regression level on the dimensions of learning school into the communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity

The independent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	Dimensions of Learning school	β	t	p
Learning school	0.523	100,152	0,000	Team learning	,06	1,22	0,220
				Mental models	,34	6,48	0,000
				Shared vision	,28	4,69	0,000
				Personal mastery	,15	3,18	0,002
The dependent variable: " Communication " dimension of organizational identity.							
p < .05							

Schools' learning school property describes 52. 3% of the variability in communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly, but team learning dimension doesn't describe the variability in the communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly (p < .05).

Table 5. Regression level on the dimensions of learning school into the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity

The independent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p	Dimensions of Learning school	β	t	p
Learning school	0.525	100,824	0,000	Team learning	,05	1,01	0,310
				Mental models	,35	6,56	0,000
				Shared vision	,30	5,00	0,000
				Personal mastery	,13	2,91	0,004
The dependent variable: " Image " dimension of organizational identity.							
p < .05							

Schools' learning school property describes 52. 5% of the variability in image dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly, but team learning dimension doesn't describe the variability in the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly. According to the results of the study, it is seen that there is a positive significant relationship between identification, goal

value sharing, communication, image dimensions of teachers organizational identity and team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery dimensions of learning school.

The findings of this study determined that schools' learning school property describes 49.3% of the variability in identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, team learning, mental models and shared vision dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity, but personal mastery dimension doesn't describe the variability in the identification dimension of teachers' organizational identity. This finding is consistent with the research findings of Nartgün and Demirer (2016), Kuş (2015) and Demircioğlu (2015). The identification dimension of organizational identity is the first step of organizational identity.

Identification is a result of organizational identity as a part of the social identity of the individual (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Identification is an agreement and integration process in time of the organization's and a person's goals and values. Identification leads members of the organization to accept the proposition of organizational decisions and to act according to their organizational functions (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985), to adopt the organizational behaviors (Shamir, 1990). The employee's adopting and accepting of organizational goals and values represents identification (İnce and Gül, 2005). It is necessary for a school to be a learning organization that teachers should stay longer at school with creating good dialogue individually or in teams. In this process, teachers adopt more of the beliefs and values of the school, therefore, they want to work longer in the same school. As a result, teachers feel emotionally identified themselves with the school (Chan, W. Y., Lau, S., Nie, Y., Lim, S., & Hogan, D., 2008). Therefore, it can be said that the possibility of identification with the learning school teachers working in institutions is higher.

According to result of this study, schools' learning school property describes 56.1% of the variability in goal value sharing dimension of teachers' organizational identity. When analyzed in terms of the dimensions of the learning school, team learning, mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the goal value sharing dimension of teachers' organizational identity. These findings are consistent with the research findings of Ayık and Şayir (2015), Doğan and Yiğit (2015) and Kalkan (2015). Common purpose unity is a size that defines how extend the teachers are in cooperation for the common school purposes. The teacher cooperation shows the degree of being constructive relations in order to improve the school's academic vision further (Gruenert, 2000: cited in Tanriverdi, 2007). Team learning should be developed to create a learning organization (Park and Rojewski in 2006). Groups have a greater intelligence by the individual intelligence and team learning is considered as a process that uses this intelligence (Töremen, 2001). So, team learning dominates in thinking and making together in teams (Dinçer, 1992).

According to other results of the study, schools' learning school property describes 52.3% of the variability in communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity. Team learning dimension of learning school doesn't describe the variability in the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly. In contrast to these findings, cooperation and good relations of teams affect team members' loyalty of staying in teams and their willingness. Hence, the more powerful communication and interaction are within the team, the more desire the team members have solidarity about goals (Eren, 2010).

According to this study, mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the communication dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly. Mental Models are organized long-term feelings, beliefs and behavioral tendencies (Cüceloğlu, 1993). Inquiries should be made, where necessary, to ensure high quality of learning and assumptions that are created in the mind must be replaced (Bayraktaroğlu and Kutanis, 2002). In summary, we perceive the world with our mental models and communicate according to these models. Previously formed mental models are demolished in the learning organizations. Organizations should get rid of models leading to wrong decisions and they should have mental models encouraging more independent thinking (Brestrich, 2000). Individually learning together in the organization is effective on the demolition of the already formed mental models in the learning organization. In this regard, it can be seen as a natural consequence that there is a positive relationship between communication dimension of organizational identity and the mental models dimension of the learning organization. The personal mastery dimension of learning school refers to the mentality dedicated to continuous improvement and learning. People with a high level of personal mastery are expanding the ability to create real search

results in life (Ataman, 2002). The higher personal mastery skills individuals have, the higher-quality learning the organization have because organizations learn through individuals (Senge, 2002). Therefore, if teachers have effective personal mastery skills in the learning school environment, communication can be achieved in a healthier way within the organization. Teachers can have more powerful organizational identity perceptions to their schools in this learning school environment in which communication is effective.

According to the research results obtained, schools' learning school property describes 52.5% of the variability in image dimension of teachers' organizational identity. Team learning dimension of learning school doesn't describe the variability in the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly. In contrast to these findings, the image of the school is measured by the size of the school, facilities, program quality, the course of the refresh rate content, extracurricular activities, hot friends climate in schools, student behavior, graduates contributions to the school, the quality of education and teachers, home-school cooperation, the state of cooperating with local agencies and school's reputation (Kurşun, 2011, s. 69). Organizational image is all beliefs, impressions and thoughts that people had about an institution (Taslak and Akin, 2005). Mental models, shared vision and personal mastery dimensions of learning school describes the variability in the image dimension of teachers' organizational identity significantly. In the learning school environments, teachers can contribute in a positive way to the image of their organization by having a common goal and vision, devoting themselves to continuous improvement and learning, changing the model in mind when necessary.

## Conclusion

According to the results of this study, there is a positive significant relationship between identification, goal value sharing, communication, image dimensions of teachers organizational identity and team learning, mental models, shared vision, personal mastery dimensions of learning school. At the same time, learning school properties predict teachers' perceptions of organizational identity.

## Recommendations

The following suggestions can be developed under this research results:

1. Teachers' perceptions of organizational identity related with what school is, how school is described and remembered can be further reinforced by spreading of learning school environments.
2. When considering the findings about the identification dimension of organizational identity with learning school, in-service training may be given within the scope of creating organizational identity in order to ensure teachers' identification with the goals and values of school.
3. Based on the results related to the image dimension of organizational identity, it can be useful that all upper institutions can make studies about learning organizations for teachers' awareness about the importance of the organization image by transforming schools into learning schools.

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