

School Principals' Self-Perceptions of Their Roles and Responsibilities in Six Countries

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine if school principals' roles and responsibilities in China, Ghana, Hungary, Turkey, Poland and the United States are significantly different from one another. This study adopts a survey design which provides a quantitative or qualitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from school principals in these six countries by using a researcher designed survey questionnaire. The quantitative data derived from principals' responses were analyzed by country and by total average according to the subsets of character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management. The principals' roles and responsibilities of the six countries were compared by using Multivariate Analysis of Variance. Answers to the three open-ended questions provide qualitative data for analysis. Emerging themes and patterns were observed among the principals' responses. Results of data analysis show that principals of the six countries confront many similar problems in their daily school functions. The unique political infrastructures of their locations determine how they address these problems to meet the individual demands of their own societies. Understanding of common challenges and emerging roles of principals in changing social and political settings provide educational leaders of these countries the opportunities to share their unique experiences and success stories.

Introduction

Roles and responsibilities of school principals have been researched independently in different countries. However, international studies on comparing the work of school principals in different countries are few. Su, Adams and Mininberg (2003) claimed that possible strengths of school

leadership existed in countries of different cultural background. Principals crossing the country line can learn from one another through sharing of their individual experiences. Studies on the comparison of school principalship across five continents among China, Ghana, Hungary, Turkey, Poland and the United States are absent. There is a need for a holistic and comprehensive comparison of principalship in these six countries. The purpose of this study is to examine if school principals' roles and responsibilities in these six countries are significantly different from one another. Results of this study would contribute to fulfilling the scholarly research needs and providing a better understanding of how schools are administered in countries of different cultural heritage across the continents. The findings of this study will offer a better understanding of the challenges each one country's principals were facing and identifying those constructive factors that culminate to strong leadership in school. Furthermore, they will provide support for justifications of reform in school principal preparation programs worldwide.

Theoretical Framework

The development of this study is based on Isaac L. Kandel's comparative education theory. Kandel conceptualized comparative education as the study of the ways particular countries addressed educational problems regarding their respective social, political, and cultural traditions. Comparative studies of education to him were built upon an understanding of the social and economic life of the culture in the study. Kandel (1933) claimed "The chief value of a comparative approach to education problems lies in an analysis of the causes which have produced them, in a comparison of the differences between the various systems and the reasons underlying them, and finally, a study of the solutions attempted" (p. xix). Kandel viewed each national education system could offer solutions to educational problems and their implementation experiences can be shared. Kandel hoped that comparative education would contribute to the development of a universal philosophy of education that is based merely on practical and empirical grounds. Kandel's comparative education viewpoint strongly supports the original concept of this study which intends to solicit the perceptions of school principals in different countries. School principals will be given the opportunity to express themselves freely in response to issues of principalship within their own cultural and economic contexts.

Review of Literature

School Principals of China

The Professional Standards of Principals (Ministry of Education, 2013) uphold the principals' level of responsibilities as well as authorities. Kao (2005) stated that school administrators in China were simply following Central Government policies. They are authoritative figures controlling all school administrative affairs (Lo, 2004). However, in Zhang's study (1998), Chinese principals expressed their desire to employ a more democratic leadership style.

School principals in China are expected to hold a high standard of moral leadership (Li, 2011; Liu, 2008; Tao, 2011). The Professional Standards of Principals (Ministry of Education, 2013) have also set strict expectations of personal and professional behaviors of school principals.

In studying school principalship in China, Zhang (2010) believed that Chinese school principals needed to build strong relationship with their faculty and staffs by sharing their administrative responsibilities. Chu and Liu (2010) further recommended that principals should connect with teachers by regular class observations.

In curriculum leadership, Zheng (2012) found that Chinese principals needed to set instructional goals, develop instructional activities, and establish procedures of instruction evaluation. They need to learn to solicit resources in support of curriculum implementation (Xia, 2012; Zhou & Xia, 2009).

A review of literature of school principalship in China strongly indicates the need of shared leadership within Chinese schools. An examination of character and administrative styles in this study will address this shared leadership issue.

School Principals of Ghana

Many school principals in Ghana have had no formal educational administrative training. They are limited on their leadership knowledge and skills to be effective school leaders (World Bank, 2004; Zame, Hope & Respress, 2008). To meet with the complex challenging educational leadership issues of today, Ghana's Institute for Educational Planning and Administration has developed legislative qualifications for school principals to require their professional training to prepare them for their initial appointment and for their continuous professional development (Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2009). This proves to be a positive enactment. Amakyl's study (2010) found that significant correlation existed between quality leadership preparation and quality school leadership in Ghana.

In the past decades, Ghana's education system has been reformed continuously to meet the needs for the kinds of labor forces society needs (Baah-Gyimah, 2010; Kpeglo, 2010). Among those reform initiatives, the decentralization of educational authorities to empower school teachers and local administrators has been most effective (Mankoe & Maynes, 1994). School leaders and teachers have been working together as a team to develop innovative reform strategies for the improvement of student achievement (Norviewu-Morthy, 2010).

Key issues of school principalship in Ghana are disclosed in the review of literature. Preparation for qualified school principals seems to be most pressing. Besides, principals and teachers are encouraged to work closely together for school improvement. The seven dimensions of this study, character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management clearly reflect the needed areas of leadership preparation.

School Principals of Hungary

Hungary experienced a dramatic change in the last twenty years from communism to democratic market economy (Halasz, 2002). The shift was from a system of political indoctrination to critical thinking of plurality of values (Horvath, 1990). School leaders have served as education change agents to facilitate government policy changes in this social and economic transition (Lowe, 2009). Principal positions have been mostly assumed by political appointees of local mayors and councils (Hungary – Administration, Finance, & Educational Research, 2009).

Hungarian principals, regardless of their background, need to meet many challenges including educational inefficiency, shortage of teacher supply, technological and pedagogical drawback, and financial difficulties (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). In recent years, as a result of decentralization of Hungarian government (Dethier, 2000), school principals have played new roles in school administration: decision-makers, curriculum and instructional leaders, public relations officer, and fiscal manager (Halasz, 2002). In their shared responsibilities, school principals have demonstrated their effective roles in positively impacting teacher beliefs and job satisfaction (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009).

The review of literature has shown that during this political and economic transition in Hungary, the new roles of school principals have emerged to include areas of decision making in curriculum and instruction, public relations and financial management. The foci of this study are placed on soliciting school principals' perceptions in assuming their new leadership roles.

School Principals of Poland

Czarnecki's study (2006) of Polish school principals indicated that they were loaded with heavy administrative responsibilities in addition to classroom teaching. "One can say that the principal is responsible for nearly everything." (Michalak, 2016, p. 260.) A Polish school leadership study by Mazurkiewicz (2012) showed that a school leader was a strong person with authority. However, Wieslaw (2011) claimed that a Polish school principal was only the head of an organization who has very limited power. Many important decisions of a school were assumed by relevant governing boards of the schools.

In Zak's study (2007), many Polish principals cared only about the organization's survival in a changing environment while ignoring their instructional leadership. Bednarska-Wnuk (2009) also uttered that a Polish principal's role in managing a school was described as a business manager. She claimed that changes in the Polish educational system have contributed to changing the principal's role that ends up prioritizing the significance of business orientation.

Review of literature in school principalship in Poland has shown that Polish principals are working under much administrative pressure. They are so busy handling administrative work that they have no time to serve as instructional leaders. The areas of school leadership in this study will reflect the current status of school principals in Poland: business managers vs instructional leaders.

School Principals of Turkey

The National Education Directorate (NED) of Turkey has developed the scope of standardized work of school principalship in the education system (Turan, 2009). Published in the Turkish Official Gazette (2006), the principals' responsibilities include organizing, executing and supervising all the administrative works in school according to the stipulations of law, statute, and regulation.

Considerations have been made to tighten up the criteria for principalship qualifications. New requirements for principal certification have become effective since 2009 (Isik, 2002; Turan, 2009). Beside administrative duties, every school principal's work also includes a weekly actual class teaching load of six hours minimum. However, they have no authority to handle personnel employment matters such as teacher hiring and firing (Aslanargun, 2009; Gumuseli, 2009).

The gender issue of school principals in Turkish education has been bothersome. Ercetin and Cahskan Maya (2005) found that for females to become school principals it is difficult to fight through the social barriers. Bayrak and Mohan (2001) also concluded that stereotyped Turkish culture has deterred many capable females to become principals.

The review of literature has displayed the unique features of school principals in Turkey. While they are expected to assume their administrative roles, school principals in Turkey are not granted the authority to manage personnel matters. Professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, and personnel management covered in this study will fully address this concern. Besides, the demographic information requested of research participants in this study will verify if gender is still an issue in Turkish principalship.

School Principals of the United States

In the United States, the focus of school principalship has been placed on instructional leadership (Munro, 2008). School principals in the United States are under pressure for continuous improvement of student academic achievement (Padhi, 2010). The No Child Left Behind legislature as part of the educational accountability movement has placed school principals under political push (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Additionally, they are anticipated to ensure student safety at school (Chan & Dishman, 2011; Su, Adams & Mininberg, 2003). They assumed responsible roles in promoting school public relations (Morris, Chan & Patterson, 2009). They also developed plans to create positive environment, adequate funding, diversity, creativity, and modern technology in support of teaching and learning (Tirozzi, 2001).

School principals' overall roles and responsibilities in the United States are laid out in the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards: (1) school vision of learning; (2) school culture, instructional program, and professional development; (3) resource operation and safe learning environment; (4) collaboration with parents and school communities; (5) professional ethics; and (6) political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

The foci of school principals' roles and responsibilities in the United States seem to be placed on student performance and safety in school. This is representing public expectations of school principals' basic commitments in the United States. In this study, all school principals will be asked of their major roles and responsibilities in the daily operation of their schools.

International Comparison of School Principalship

Because of the historical, social and cultural differences among countries, in comparing the roles of responsibilities of school principals from different countries, attention has to be paid to the individual challenging environments they have to face. School principals' perception in one country would be different from those of another. A comparison of school principals' daily responsibilities was conducted by McAdams (1998) to include five countries: Denmark, England, Germany, Japan, and the United States. The findings of the study disclosed that U.S. principals' daily work schedule was busier than those of other participating countries. Flanary and Terehoff (2000) studied school principalship of China, Ireland and Russia. They found that principals in their study perceived that they must respond to global changes in economics, politics, and demographics to be effective in managing their schools. Another principal comparative study was performed by Johnson, Moller, Jacobson and Wong (2008). They studied the characteristics and practices of principalship among eight countries: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden and the United States. They asked school principals to report their daily work in school operation and found more similarities than differences in school principals' daily practices among schools in these eight countries.

European school principals' administrative styles, attitudes and practices were studied by the German Institute for International Educational Research (2009). The findings of the study indicated that principals' administrative styles, attitudes and practices played a contributing role in school improvement and effectiveness. In their study of school principals of Turkey and the United States, Babaoglan and Litchka (2010) examined the principals' competencies and found that gender played a significant role in principals' performances in school. Specifically comparing the abilities of school principals between Poland and the United States, Litchka (2015) solicited principal data through the perceptions of teachers. Five leadership practices were examined: Model

the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart. Results of the study indicated that teachers from Poland rated their principals significantly higher than teachers in the United States in each of the five practices.

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) published by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009) provided details about the increasingly significant roles of school principals and their responsibilities in 38 countries. Results of the study indicated that about 60% of the principals spent 30-54% of their time on administrative work. In working with teachers on instructional improvement, 70% of the principals reported that it took 17-30% of their time. Most of the principals indicated that they used student performance evaluation results to develop school goals and academic programs.

The review of literature has indicated that international comparative studies of school principalship could take many different approaches. Studies under review have compared principalship of different countries in their responses to global issues, political perspectives, attitudes, background characteristics, performance and time spent in daily performance of their duties. Based on Kandel's comparative education theory, this study takes a practical approach to compare school principals in their roles and responsibilities in their respective cultural and economic contexts.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1. How are school principals' roles and responsibilities in China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States different from one another?
2. Do school principals' gender and age make any difference in their responses to the principals' roles and responsibilities in these six countries?
3. Is there a difference in the major responsibilities, challenges, and job fulfillment among school principals of China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a survey design which provides a quantitative or qualitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from school principals in China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States through the use of a survey questionnaire.

Participants

Participants of this study were school principals from six different countries. China represents Asia; Hungary and Poland represent Europe; Ghana represents Africa; Turkey represents the Middle East, and the United States represents North America. These six countries were selected for inclusion in the study because of geographic distribution considerations as well as cooperation of scholars who expressed interests in participating in this comparative study. The unique cultural characteristics of each of these countries have strong impact on the perceptions of school leadership practices. One hundred and thirty-one (72.8%) of 180 randomly selected school principals in the State of Georgia, United States, participated in this study. Sixty-four (75.3%) of 85 randomly selected school principals from Changsha area, Hunan Province, China, participated in the study. Fifty-four (69.2%) of 78 randomly selected Turkish principals from Istanbul and its

suburb areas participated in the study. One hundred seventy-nine (89.5%) of 200 randomly selected school principals from Budapest Metropolitan Areas, Hungary, participated in the survey. In Ghana, 45 (59.2%) of 76 randomly selected school principals participated in the study. In Poland, 71 (71%) of 100 randomly selected school principals participated in the study. The school principals of these six countries were randomly selected by gender, age, and geographical location for inclusion in the study. Of all the 544 participating principals, 56.9% were males and 43.1% were females. One percent of the principals were within the age group of 21–30, 16.4% within the age group of 31–40, 45.9% within the age group of 41–50, 34.7% within the age group of 51–60 and 2.1% within the age group of 61–70.

Research Instrument

A 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire was first designed in the English language by one of the researchers to survey school principals in the United States. The questions were derived from current literature of school principalship. It covers the principals' roles and responsibilities in seven leadership areas: character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management. A panel of 10 school principals was invited to review the contents, the format and the language used in the survey. The validity of the instrument was established through revisions as recommended by the review panel. Consequently, three open-ended questions were also attached to the quantitative survey to solicit principals' perceptions on their major responsibilities, their challenges, and the fulfillment in their positions as school principals. Another 20 school principals were invited to participate in the reliability testing with the updated instrument. The test and retest reliability coefficient was found to be .885 and internal consistency of the instrument was tested by using Cronbach Alpha Test with an overall alpha of .854.

The instrument, both quantitative and qualitative parts, was first created in the English language. It was then translated to Chinese language by one of the authors. Without seeing the original version, a Chinese scholar with profound English language background was asked to translate the Chinese version back to English language. The original English version was then compared with the translated English version for consistency. The Hungarian version, the Polish version and the Turkish version of the survey instrument were translated from English to Hungarian, Polish and Turkish languages by language professionals. The Hungarian, Polish and Turkish speaking co-researchers of this study supervised the translation process to ensure the quality of the translated versions. Ghana is an English speaking country. No translation is necessary.

Data Collection and Analysis

In data collection, an author was assigned with data collection in a country. He/she was responsible for contacting the sampled school principals of his/her assigned country through e-mails to invite them to participate in the study. Follow-up e-mails were sent to the sampled school principals to encourage participation. School principals participated in the study by responding to the survey and had the completed survey sent back to the assigned authors.

The quantitative data derived from principals' responses were analyzed by country and by total average according to the subsets of character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management. This is to examine the extent of the school principals' responses in general and in each of the subsets of data. The principals' perceptions of roles and responsibilities of China,

Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States were compared by using Multivariate Analysis of Variance. The covariates in this analysis include principals' gender and age to control the possible impact of gender and age on the principals' perceptions. Answers to the three open-ended questions provide qualitative data for analysis. All the responses of the school principals were systematically coded. Emerging themes and patterns were observed among the school principals' coded responses. The most representative responses were quoted in this paper to indicate the general tendencies of responses.

Research Findings

The major findings of this study are reported by order of the research questions as follows:

Research Question 1:

How are school principals' roles and responsibilities in China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States different from one another?

The findings of this study as a result of data analyses have indicated that the school principals' perceived roles and responsibilities are significantly different among the six countries of China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States in all the seven school leadership areas: character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management.

Data of 544 principals' responses from the six countries were included in the statistical analysis. The average mean of all the responses was 4.296 with a 5-point scale. When data were analyzed by leadership category, the mean score of Character was 4.538, Knowledge was 3.935, Skill was 4.399, Style was 4.370, Duties was 4.285, Personnel was 4.307, and Student Affairs was 4.236. (See Table 1) The leadership categories were rank-ordered from the highest mean score to the lowest mean score as Character, Skill, Style, Personnel, Duties, Student Affairs and Knowledge.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics – Means of All Principal Responses By leadership category

Category	N	Mean	SD
Character	544	4.538	0.531
Skill	544	4.399	0.427
Style	544	4.370	0.557
Personnel	544	4.307	0.503
Duties	544	4.285	0.449
Student Affairs	544	4.236	0.508
Knowledge	544	3.935	0.503
Total	544	4.296	0.424

Principals' responses were also analyzed by leadership category and by country. Descriptive statistics indicated that the highest and the lowest ratings in Character were scored by the United States (4.679) and Ghana (3.978) respectively. In the Knowledge category, Poland scored the highest (4.107) and Ghana the lowest (3.707). In Skill, the United States also scored the highest (4.482) and Poland ranked the lowest (4.206). Turkey was ranked the highest in Style (4.583) and Ghana was ranked the lowest (4.167) in the same category. In Duties, the United States gained the highest (4.566) while Poland was rated the lowest (4.105). In managing Personnel, Turkish

principals rated themselves the highest (4.417) and Polish principals the lowest (4.049). Hungary ranked the highest in Student Affairs (4.451) and China the lowest (3.766). The averages of all leadership category ratings were topped by the United States (4.403) with second positions taken by Hungary (4.339), followed by Turkey (4.325), China (4.172), Poland (4.164) and Ghana (4.114). (See Table 2)

China's highest rated category was Character (4.438) and the lowest rated category was Student Affairs (3.766). United States' highest rated category was Character (4.679) and the lowest rated category was Knowledge (4.099). Hungary's highest rated category was Character (4.669) and the lowest rated category was Knowledge (3.761). Turkey's highest rated category was Style (4.583) and the lowest rated category was Knowledge (3.896). Ghana's highest rated category was Skill (4.271) and the lowest rated category was Knowledge (3.707). Poland's highest rated category was Character (4.507) and the lowest rated category was Student Affairs (3.993). (See Table 2)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics – Overall Mean by Leadership Category and by Country

Category	China	US	Hungary	Turkey	Ghana	Poland
Character	4.438	4.679	4.669	4.389	3.978	4.507
Knowledge	4.091	4.099	3.761	3.896	3.707	4.10
Skill	4.369	4.482	4.459	4.389	4.271	4.256
Style	4.195	4.447	4.439	4.583	4.167	4.183
Duties	4.179	4.566	4.192	4.318	4.229	4.105
Personnel	4.168	4.366	4.404	4.417	4.217	4.049
Student Affairs	3.766	4.284	4.451	4.282	4.233	3.993
Total	4.172	4.403	4.339	4.325	4.114	4.164

Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to determine if there was any significant difference in each of the leadership categories among the six countries. Gender and age of the school principals were included in the analysis serving as covariates to control the possible effect these variables could have on the process of the analysis. Results of the analysis indicated that significant differences existed among the school principal responses of the six countries in all the subsets of the leadership categories: Character, Knowledge, Skill, Style, Duties, Personnel and Student Affairs. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Country Comparison by Leadership Category

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. Level
Country	Character	18.437	5	3.687	14.980	.00
	Knowledge	16.977	5	3.395	15.160	.00
	Skill	4.460	5	.892	4.844	.00
	Style	10.605	5	2.121	7.325	.00
	Duties	17.354	5	3.471	19.960	.00
	Personnel	8.564	5	1.713	7.090	.00
	Student Affairs	24.891	5	4.978	23.239	.00
	Average	4.860	5	2.034	9.906	.00

Post Hoc Tests were performed to locate the significant differences of school principals' responses among the six countries by leadership category. Results of the tests indicated that there were more significant differences in school principals' perceptions of handling student affairs than the other leadership categories. In student affairs, principals' perceptions from China and Poland were significantly lower than the rest of the four countries. Reports on Skill as a leadership category had the least significant differences among the countries in the study. Another observed pattern of significant differences was that U.S. principals perceived character and duties as their roles and responsibilities significantly different from the other countries of the study. (See Table 4)

Table 4. *Post Hoc Tests – Significant Differences of Principal Responses from Six Countries by Leadership Category (Only significant differences between two countries are reported.)*

Character	Knowledge	Skill	Style	Duties	Personnel	Student Affairs
1 and 2	1 and 3	1 and 6	1 and 2	1 and 2	1 and 2	1 and 2
1 and 5	1 and 5	2 and 5	1 and 3	2 and 3	1 and 4	1 and 3
2 and 4	2 and 3	2 and 6	1 and 4	2 and 4	2 and 5	1 and 4
2 and 5	2 and 4	3 and 5	2 and 5	2 and 5	2 and 6	1 and 5
2 and 6	2 and 5	4 and 6	2 and 6	3 and 4	3 and 5	1 and 6
3 and 4	3 and 4		3 and 5	4 and 6	3 and 6	2 and 3
3 and 5	3 and 6		3 and 6		4 and 5	2 and 6
3 and 6	4 and 5		4 and 6		4 and 6	3 and 4
4 and 5	4 and 6					3 and 5
5 and 6	5 and 6					3 and 6
						4 and 6
						5 and 6

Note: 1 = China 2 = U.S. 3 = Hungary 4 = Turkey 5 = Ghana 6 = Poland

Research Questions 2:

Do school principals' gender and age make any difference in their responses to the principals' roles and responsibilities in these six countries?

Results of the data analysis have indicated that school principals' age does not make any significant difference in their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in this study. In analyzing if school principals' gender makes any significant difference in their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, no analysis was performed in Turkey because all the participating principals were males. No significant difference in principals' perceptions was found between males and females in China, Ghana and Poland. However, significant difference existed between male and female school principals of Hungary and the United States in some of the seven leadership areas of the study.

Principals' average responses of the five age groups (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61-70) were compared to see if there was any significant difference among the groups. A One-Way Analysis of Variance was used. Results of the analysis revealed no significant difference in any comparison of principals' age group responses. (See Table 5)

Table 5. Analysis of Variance – Comparison of Average Principal Responses by Age Group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. Level
Between Groups	.147	4	.037	.303	.876
Within Groups	66.015	542	.122		
Total	66.163	546			

Male and female principals' responses were compared with the use of a t-test to see if there was any significant difference in the perceptions of male and female principals. Responses of male principals averaged to be 4.23 and responses of female principals averaged to be 4.37. The difference between the two group means was found to be significant at .00 level. (See Table 6) Further analysis of the gender data showed that female principals responded significantly higher than male principals in most of the leadership categories in Hungary and the United States. No significance difference was detected between male and female principal responses in China and Poland. Though no significant difference was found in the responses of male and female principals in Ghana, female principals rated the leadership categories consistently higher than male principals. No comparison was made in principals' responses between genders in Turkey because there was no female principal participation in the study. (See Table 7)

Table 6. Independent Samples T-Test – Comparison of Principal Responses by Gender

	t-value	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	-4.511	547	.000	-.13320
Equal variances not assumed	-4.561	518.7	.000	-.13320

Table 7. Significant Differences Among Male and Female Principals' Responses by Country

	China	U.S.	Hungary	Turkey	Ghana	Poland
Character	No	Yes	Yes	N.A.	No	No
Knowledge	No	No	No	N.A.	No	No
Skill	No	No	Yes	N.A.	No	No
Style	No	Yes	Yes	N.A.	No	No
Duties	No	Yes	Yes	N.A.	No	No
Personnel	No	Yes	No	N.A.	No	No
Student Affairs	No	No	Yes	N.A.	No	No

Note: 1. No sufficient number of female principals to make a meaningful analysis in Turkey.

2. Female principals in Ghana responded more favorably than male principals though no significant difference was found in the responses.

Research Question 3:

Is there a difference in the major responsibilities, challenges, and job fulfillment among school principals of China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States?

The qualitative data in this study were derived from the school principals' responses to the three open-ended questions as part of the survey. Principals' responses from the six countries were examined by major responsibilities, challenges and job fulfillment. Student safety was perceived by principals of the U.S., Hungary and Poland to be their major responsibilities. Student

achievement was perceived by principals of the U.S., Hungary and Ghana to be their major responsibilities. Personnel matters were perceived by principals of China, Hungary and Turkey to be their major responsibilities. In major challenges, principals of many countries shared their perceived challenges as public relations (Turkey, China, Hungary and Ghana), finance (Turkey, Hungary, Ghana and U.S.), and personnel matters (China, Ghana, Turkey, Poland and the U.S.). Unique individual challenges were also identified by school principals as student achievement (U.S.), school facilities (Ghana), curriculum development (Hungary) and changing regulations and expectations (Poland). In major fulfillments, all the school principals of the six countries agreed that their major fulfillments were student success, faculty and staff success and gaining school community support.

Major responsibilities of a school principal. Analysis of qualitative data indicated that there were similarities and differences between principals of China, Ghana, Hungary, Turkey, Poland and the United States in their identification of major responsibilities. Three common major responsibilities were clearly identified: school safety, student achievement and personnel affairs. (See Table 8.)

Table 8. Principals' Major Responsibilities

Country	
	School Safety
U.S.	* The safety of the students, faculty, and staff is a priority. * The major responsibility of a school leader is to provide a SAFE, nurturing, and accepting environment for students to make effective academic, emotional, and social progress.
Hungary	* Maintain a safe school environment. * Develop rules and guidelines to ensure smooth operation of school. * Follow the updated laws to manage the school.
Poland	* To create a safe school environment for teachers and students. (Cited by 15 principals.)
	Student Achievement
U.S.	* The focus has to be on student achievement.
Poland	* Assuring student learning outcomes and results of the matriculation examination are the major responsibilities of a school principal. * My main responsibility is to prepare my students to enable them for further education or work.
Hungary	* My work is to introduce new instructional strategies to ensure student success.
Ghana	* Ensure a conducive learning environment for effective teaching and learning. * Supervise teachers in the discharge of their duties. * Ensure that quality teachers are produced for the basic schools in good instructional skills, excellent moral attitude and self-motivation.
	School Personnel Matters
China	* First, organize the faculty and staff to ensure smooth operation of school. Second, involve faculty and staff in planning for long term goals. Third, foster a cooperative climate in school.
Hungary	* Foster a cooperative climate among faculty and staff in school.
Turkish	* A principal has to be honest, hardworking, fair and dependable to be successful. * School principals have the job to motivate students and teachers to enhance the quality of education.
	Other Unique Responsibilities
China	* Goal setting, public relations and school culture promotions.
Poland	* School organization and efficient operation with the focus on student education.

In school safety, principals in the United States focused on the safety of students and teachers as one of their major responsibilities.

As stated by some U.S. principals:

The safety of the students, faculty, and staff is a priority.

The major responsibility of a school leader is to provide a SAFE, nurturing, and accepting environment for students to make effective academic, emotional, and social progress.

Hungarian principals considered maintaining safe learning environment and protecting student interests as their major responsibilities. As claimed by some Hungarian principals:

Maintain a safe school environment.

Develop rules and guidelines to ensure smooth operation of school.

Follow the updated laws to manage the school.

Principal's major responsibilities as perceived by Polish principals were efficient school management and student safety. As many as 15 Polish principals, like U.S. and Hungarian principals, cited school safety as a major concern. They claimed it their major responsibility.

To create a safe school environment for teachers and students.

In student achievement, principals of the United States considered it a primary responsibility because of public pressure and government mandate. One of the principals made it clear that "the focus has to be on student achievement."

Student learning outcomes were claimed by Polish principals to be a major responsibility of a school principal. They claimed that:

Assuring student learning outcomes and results of the matriculation examination are the major responsibilities of a school principal.

My main responsibility is to prepare my students to enable them for further education or work.

Hungarian principals considered it one of their major responsibilities "to introduce new instructional strategies to ensure student success."

Ghanaian principals also wanted to enhance student achievement by assuring the implementation of instructional supervision. They acted on the following areas:

Ensure a conducive learning environment for effective teaching and learning.

Supervise teachers in the discharge of their duties.

Ensure that quality teachers are produced for the basic schools in good instructional skills, excellent moral attitude and self-motivation.

In managing school personnel matters, Chinese principals considered it a major responsibility. They made personnel issues as priorities of their daily operations. They said, "First, organize the faculty and staff to ensure smooth operation of school. Second, involve faculty and staff in planning for long term goals. Third, foster a cooperative climate in school."

Principals of Hungary recognized managing personnel issues as one of their major responsibilities. To achieve an environment of high working efficiency, they insisted on "fostering a cooperative climate among faculty and staff in school."

Turkish principals stressed personnel and professional integrity to enhance the quality of education. Turkish principals responded:

A principal has to be honest, hardworking, fair and dependable to be successful.

School principals have the job to motivate students and teachers to enhance the quality of education.

Other unique responsibilities of school principals in individual countries include:

Chinese principals considered goal setting, public relations and school culture promotions as their major responsibilities.

Polish principals' responses to major responsibilities include matters relating to school's organization and efficient operation with the focus on student education.

Major challenges of a school principal. School community relation was identified as a common challenge of school principals of Turkey, China, Hungary and Ghana. They realized that:

Parents' careless attitude of their children's work is a serious concern.

Principals are pressured by the school community and parents with high expectations.

Different social agencies interrupted the educational processes.

It is challenging to share governance with community demand.

Insufficient communication between parents and schools negatively impacts student learning.

School principals of Turkey, Hungary, Ghana and the United States faced the same challenging financial problems. Turkish principals said:

There is serious shortage of teachers, tools and supplies.

The appropriation of personnel support is insufficient, so as resources.

Principals of the United States reflected their opinions in the following:

Maintaining efficient faculty and staff in a year of budget cuts is not an easy job.

The biggest challenge is to maintain the high level of faculty enthusiasm with a less than reasonable budget.

The school financial problem was also reported by two Hungarian principals as follows:

Keeping quality teacher with less than minimum salary is not easy.

The challenges are how to provide sufficient resources to support continuous growth.

The principals of Ghana also expressed their need for financial support:

Insufficient funding compromises the school operation and learning opportunities.

Many teachers are constantly looking for other better paid jobs outside the school setting.

Another common challenge among principals of China, Ghana, Turkey, Poland and the United States was the handling of personnel matters. They complained over personnel matters as:

A unique challenge is to work with teachers for motivation to deliver their classes in an interesting manner and to utilize modern technology.

The challenges are how to lead teachers to continue develop their professional skills and to fairly distribute their work and evaluate their performance.

Perhaps, the biggest challenge to a veteran principal is to maintain the high level of faculty enthusiasm and energy needed to be effective.

Faculty issues are tremendous: high turnover rates; insufficient training, retaining of good teachers, and certification issues.

Providing support for teachers and employees through the evaluation of their teaching and working effectiveness is a challenge. It has to be fair to provide encouragement and at the same time pinpoint areas of improvement.

Furthermore, school principals also expressed their concerns over unique challenges they were facing in their own country. Principals of the United States perceived their greatest challenge as issues associated with meeting Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) of students. Inadequate educational facility supports in school diminished teaching and learning effectiveness was the

challenge of the Ghanaian principals. In Hungary, principals' daily challenges were deciding on the school curriculum at a time of mixed ideologies. On the other hand, Polish principals perceived their unique challenges as meeting the demands of continuously changing regulations and the changing expectations of the education market. (See Table 9.)

Table 9. Principals' Major Challenges

Country	
	School Community Relation
Turkey	* Parents' careless attitude of their children's work is a serious concern.
China	* Principals are pressured by the school community and parents with high expectations.
Hungary	* Different social agencies interrupted the educational processes.
Ghana	* It is challenging to share governance with community demand. * Insufficient communication between parents and schools negatively impacts student learning.
	Financial Problems
Turkey	* There is serious shortage of teachers, tools and supplies. * The appropriation of personnel support is insufficient, so as resources.
U.S.	* Maintaining efficient faculty and staff in a year of budget cuts is not an easy job. * The biggest challenge is to maintain the high level of faculty enthusiasm with a less than reasonable budget.
Hungary	* Keeping quality teacher with less than minimum salary is not easy. * The challenges are how to provide sufficient resources to support continuous growth.
Ghana	* Insufficient funding compromises the school operation and learning opportunities. * Many teachers are constantly looking for other better paid jobs outside the school setting.
	Personnel Matters
China	* A unique challenge is to work with teachers for motivation to deliver their classes in an interesting manner and to utilize modern technology.
Turkey	* Faculty issues are tremendous: high turnover rates; insufficient training, retaining of good teachers, and certification.
Ghana	* The challenges are how to lead teachers to continue develop their professional skills and to fairly distribute their work and evaluate their performance.
Poland	* The biggest challenge to a veteran principal is to maintain the high level of faculty enthusiasm and energy needed to be effective.
U.S.	* Providing support for teachers and employees through the evaluation of their teaching and working effectiveness is a challenge. It has to be fair to provide encouragement and at the same time pinpoint areas of improvement.
	Other Unique Challenges
U.S.	* Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) of students.
Ghana	* Inadequate educational facility supports in school diminished teaching and learning effectiveness.
Hungary	* Deciding on the school curriculum at a time of mixed ideologies.
Poland	* Continuously changing regulations and the changing expectations of the education market.

Fulfillment of a school principal. In the fulfillment of a school principal's job, school principals in Ghana, Hungary, China, Turkey, Poland and the United States shared the same opinions. Most of them highlighted their greatest fulfillment in seeing student achievement, working with professional faculty and staff, and gaining community support. (See Table 10.)

Table 10. Principals' Major Fulfillment

Country	Student Success, Faculty and Staff Success and Community Support
China	* The greatest fulfillment is coming from the graduation of a group of socially responsible youngsters acknowledged by the community. * Teachers and students enjoyed their advancement under positive school culture.
U.S.	* The fulfillment is spending time with students, seeing them mature and grow academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. * It is satisfying to see teachers that you hire really do a good job and become effective educators.
Turkey	* It is a joy to see students making higher grades and graduates getting better jobs. * It is exciting to witness educational quality improvement through efficient management.
Ghana	* The joy of seeing pupils excel in their academic work and becoming productive citizens at responsible positions in society and not as liabilities. * To be a responsible head, to lead a mass of teachers and pupils to achieve their aims and aspiration in life.
Poland	* The principal finds fulfillment in his/her work in establishing good contact with students and their self-governing body. * When I meet with former school graduates, I enjoy hearing their success stories after school. * One of my job fulfillments as a school principal is to help teachers meet their professional goals. * It is an excitement to see that the school earns a good name with development in various aspects of student life.
Hungary	* A great fulfillment is seeing students successfully completing their program of study. * Teachers, parents and students take pride in the achievement of the school. * The greatest joy of a principal is to see that their contributions make a difference.

Chinese principals' excitement is expressed in the following:

The greatest fulfillment is coming from the graduation of a group of socially responsible youngsters acknowledged by the community.

Teachers and students enjoyed their advancement under positive school culture.

Principals in the United States had the following to say about job satisfaction:

The fulfillment is spending time with students, seeing them mature and grow academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

It is satisfying to see teachers that you hire really do a good job and become effective educators.

Turkish principals made the following comments about the student achievement under their guidance:

It is a joy to see students making higher grades and graduates getting better jobs.

It is exciting to witness educational quality improvement through efficient management.

Ghana principals' comments about their professional fulfillment are expressed with great excitement in the following:

The joy of seeing pupils excel in their academic work and becoming productive citizens at responsible positions in society and not as liabilities.

To be a responsible head, to lead a mass of teachers and pupils to achieve their aims and aspiration in life.

Polish principals were also overjoyed with seeing student achievement, faculty advancement, and attainment of school goals. Their excitement can be seen in the following citations:

The principal finds fulfillment in his/her work in establishing good contact with students and their self-governing body.

When I meet with former school graduates, I enjoy hearing their success stories after school.

One of my job fulfillment as a school principal is to help teachers meet their professional goals.

It is an excitement to see that the school earns a good name with development in various aspects of student life.

Hungarian principals enjoyed seeing the outcomes of their hard work and they knew that their tireless effort made a positive impact on the life of others.

A great fulfillment is seeing students successfully completing their program of study.

Teachers, parents and students take pride in the achievement of the school.

The greatest joy of a principal is to see that their contributions make a difference.

Discussion

There are limitations to the study that render difficulties to the generalization of the findings. First, only school principals of certain selected areas of a country were involved in the study. This study is limited to participants from only one state in the United States and only the metro-areas of Budapest, Hungary, Rzeszow, Poland, Changsha, China and Cape Coast, Ghana. This study also selected participants from several provinces in Turkey. As regional differences are considered, interpretation of findings in this study can only be made with reference to geographical areas included in this study. Generalization cannot be made to all the school principals in any of the six countries. Second, another limitation of the study is to use a random sampling method in Poland and the U.S. and convenience sampling in China, Ghana, Hungary and Turkey. When random sampling of principals in China, Ghana, Hungary and Turkey did not generate enough responses for the study, the decision was made to employ a convenience sampling approach to collect data for the study. Another dilemma is the variation of sample sizes of the six countries. Therefore, statistical approach of Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to analyze the variance of multi variables based on group means. Small sample size makes the findings of the study more restrictive in interpretation and generalization.

The findings of this study though not surprising are significantly applicable to daily operation of schools. These findings pose several educational points of interest worthy of discussion in the following:

First, the United States started its graduate school program of principal preparation much earlier than China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland and Turkey. School principals in the U.S. have to be certified under approved formal preparation programs. Therefore, it is not surprising to find the results of the study indicating significant differences in school principals' roles and responsibilities of the six countries in favor of the United States. Ghana school principals need professional principalship training to deal with complex school administrative duties of today. Hungarian principals are selected by the city council with little attention to educational leadership backgrounds of the candidates. Chinese principals are appointed with the approval for Communist Party loyalty. This is not uncommon in developing countries where many school principals have not received professional training. The findings of this study reflect similar situations in Ghana as described by the World Bank (2004) and Zame, Hope and Respress (2008), and in Turkey as described by Isik (2002).

Second, results of data analysis also indicated that among the seven subsets of principals' perception data, Knowledge was ranked the lowest. This is a clear indication that principals of many countries are in great need for professional development. The integration of technology in

school administration, for example, has triggered the fact that many school principals of developing countries could not catch up with the latest of educational technology.

Third, results of data analysis in this study indicated that school principals in all six countries believed in professional ethics in school leadership. They understood that their support from faculty, staff, parents and students was built on a strong foundation of ethical character. Literature of Chinese school principalship also reflects the high moral standards observed by principals (Li, 2011; Liu, 2008; Tao, 2011). School principals in Hungary and Poland also hold strict professional standards because of their appointments by government officials or high-level governing boards (Hungary – Administration, Finance, & Educational Research, 2009; Wieslaw, 2011).

Fourth, school principals in all countries placed a high priority in their daily duties on the promotion of high standards of student achievement. This is in agreement with current literature which identifies the role of a school principal as an instructional leader (Czarnecki, 2006; Halasz, 2002; Isik, 2002; Munro, 2008; Norviewu-Morthy, 2010; Padhi, 2010; Turan, 2009; Zheng, 2012). In fact, all school principals take pride in improving student achievement.

Fifth, results of the study indicated that female principals' responses were more agreeable and congruent than those of male principals in all participating countries except Turkey. This is agreeing with the study by Babaoglan and Litchka (2010) indicating that the principals' gender played a significant role in principals' performances in school. The findings of this study is contrasting the current situation in Turkey where few females are appointed to be school principals (Bayrak & Mohan, 2001; Ercetin & Cahskan Maya, 2005).

Sixth, as countries open themselves to a greater degree of international collaboration, educational beliefs across the six countries regarding school administration may become closer. One example resulting from this study is the sharing of viewpoints by principals of all the countries regarding the professional fulfillment of principalship. It is anticipated that the range of difference in school principals' roles and responsibilities will be narrowed in coming years because of continued interaction among principals of different countries. Educational understanding would increase despite cultural differences.

Seventh, in administrative duties, the difference between principals' perceptions among the six countries could point to the fact that principals need to exercise judgment over the daily operation of their schools to reflect the expectations of their respective governments and people they serve. They understand a common base of school administration they could go by, and, at the same time, they need to react differently to unique circumstances as an essential part of their administrative duties. The findings of this study are in full response to Kandel's conceptualization of comparative education that international comparative studies reflect the ways particular countries addressed educational problems regarding the respective social, political, and cultural traditions of their countries (Kandel, 1933).

This study is a general comparison of the overall roles and responsibilities of school principals in six countries. It covers seven areas of school administration: character, professional knowledge, professional skill, administrative style, administrative duties, personnel management, and student affairs management. Future studies could be developed with the following directions:

1. Future studies could focus on specific areas of school administration for comparison, such as principals of different countries handling school finance and public relations.
2. Future studies could include more countries and larger sample sizes to facilitate generalization of the findings.

3. Future studies could also focus only on one region of the world with similar cultural orientation. For example, a study can be conducted on comparing curriculum leadership of school principals in southeast Asian countries.

Conclusion and Implications

Results of this study have indicated that differences in the school principals' roles and responsibilities of China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States are inevitable despite increasing contacts between the six countries. These differences, though narrowed in recent years, will continue to exist because of basic differences in cultural orientation, political views, and developmental needs. Principals of the six countries confront many similar problems in their daily school functions. However, unique political infrastructures of their locations determine how they address these problems to meet the individual demands of their own societies. Understanding of common challenges and emerging roles of principals in changing social and political settings provide educational leaders of these countries the opportunities to share their unique experiences and success stories. The results can be beneficial to educators across the world (Flanary & Terehoff, 2000; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008).

The findings of this study have offered implications to educational policy makers and practitioners as follows:

School principals in China, Ghana, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and the United States confront similar problems in the daily operation of their schools. School safety, student achievement, personnel problems, budgetary constraints, and curriculum are some of the most common issues in schools today. School principal preparation programs of these countries could develop their programs with emphasis on these emerging administrative issues.

Educational institutions with school leadership programs in different countries need to aim at promoting programs that foster international comparative learning. Understanding how school administrative issues are handled by principals of other countries would certainly help improve principals' administrative knowledge and skills in one country.

School principals worldwide could learn from the findings of this study that in the daily operation of their schools, they need to act to address the demands and expectations of the community they serve and to perform their duties in accordance with the regulations that govern their educational systems.

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APPENDIX

PRINCIPALS' SELF-PERCEPTIONS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School: Elementary_____ Secondary_____

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Age: 21-30_____ 31-40_____ 41-50_____ 51-60_____ 61-70_____

Years in education: 1- 5 _____ 6 -10 _____ 11-15 _____ 16-20 _____ 21 or more _____

Part I

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements inside the parenthesis of the corresponding statement. Use the following rating scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

A school principal...

CHARACTER

1. () leads the school with strong ethical standards.
2. () models ethical behavior in his/her daily administrative duties.
3. () establishes his/her creditability at work.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

4. () understands the politics of working successfully with government agencies.
5. () applies educational philosophies in assisting student academic development.
6. () has a strong background in strategies that improve student academic achievement.
7. () does not need administrative preparation to lead a school.
8. () improves his/her leadership skills by pursuing professional development opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL SKILL

9. () assigns faculty and staff to responsible positions compatible with their abilities.
10. () coordinates the work of different departments in the school.
11. () possesses strong analytical skills to manage daily school business.
12. () makes effective decisions for school improvement.
13. () manages his/her time appropriately to achieve the highest work efficiency.

ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE

14. () promotes democracy in school by involving stakeholders in shared decision-making.
15. () conducts self-evaluation of his/her performance.

ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

16. () develops attainable goals and objectives for school improvement plans.
17. () places instructional activities as a first priority.
18. () prepares his/her school to meet future challenges.
19. () manages all school resources to support instructional activities.
20. () implements educational policies by thoroughly understanding their significance.
21. () develops the curriculum based on developmental stages of the students.
22. () creates and supports a conducive environment for learning.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

23. () encourages faculty and staff to continually improve their areas of specialization.
24. () assists faculty and staff to accomplish their professional goals.
25. () encourages faculty and staff to actively participate in managing the school's resources.
26. () assists professional development of faculty and staff by evaluating their performance.

STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT

- 27. () develops a counseling program to assist students with their academic needs.
- 28. () Develops and enforces a positive school-wide student behavior management plan.
- 29. () promotes positive learning attitudes among students.
- 30. () develops student interest in responsible citizenship and civic affairs.

Part II.

Please respond to the following questions about school principalship:

- What do you perceive as the major responsibility of a school principal?
- What are the major challenges of a school principal today?
- What is fulfilling about the work of a school principal?

END OF SURVEY