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Research Article

# Views of Primary School Administrators on Change in Schools and Change Management Practices

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the opinions of primary school administrators about change, and to reveal which strategies they use to manage change in schools. This is a qualitative study conducted in 2014 academic year in Muğla province. Research data were collected from primary school administrators through semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed through content analysis. Some findings of the study suggest that according to school administrators, change is changing, renewing, and updating situations that create problems in implementation. School administrators try to determine the need for change in schools by analyzing the results of the satisfaction surveys conducted in schools, by comparing their schools with international practices, and by evaluating school's achievement status along with student and teacher demands and requests. According to school administrators, there is a need to change in instructional activities, in trusting teachers, in ensuring socialization of students, in regulations, and in mentality. School administrators do not have much freedom in creating change in schools. Change by school administrators in schools is generally in the areas of physical structure, technological equipment, and increased use of technology. There is resistance to change in schools. Schools administrators try to overcome this problem mainly through persuasion.

## Keywords

School • School administrator • Change • Organizational change • Change management

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Globalization, awareness of the importance of investment in human capital, exponential increase in knowledge, rapid development of technology, changing needs and expectations, establishment of international standards, and similar social, economic, political and technological developments have a significant impact on internal structures and operation of schools, and drive them to change (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). What is discussed now is not the necessity of change, but how to manage this process of change and how to achieve success (Saylı & Tüfekçi, 2008); because in order for a system to sustain and to be effective, it needs to adapt itself to the ever-changing conditions around itself (Kurşunoğlu, 2006). Planning the change and ensuring its sustainability through successfully managing and implementing it is crucial for an organization to improve itself, to respond to demands, and to successfully continue to exist for a longer time (Akyüz, 2006; Özmen & Sönmez, 2007). Change, in its general meaning, describes a situation where individuals or objects change their places or personal knowledge and skills become advanced over time (Koçel, 2011). In other words, change is the transformation of a system, a process or an environment from one status to another in a planned or unplanned manner (Sabuncuoğlu, 2008). According to Kant, change happens when “special characteristics of something undergo change” or when “something is transformed into something else” (Yeniçeri, 2002). From an organizational point of view, change describes a process experienced by an organization in order to provide more products and services in a more efficient, more productive and more competitive manner using more economic means in a shorter period of time. Changes in economic conditions, technological developments, market changes, legal amendments, and changing customer preferences due to social and political changes are considered among the external reasons of organizational change, whereas human resources problems, organizational inadequacies, financial problems, managerial behaviors and decisions as well as in-house innovation are considered among the internal reasons for change (Öztop, 2014). It is crucial for administrators to be aware of and to give reactions against such reasons, forcing organizations to change in terms of the organizations’ success, both during this process of change and in the future. Change is a must for ensuring and sustaining organizational development, while change management as a skill is a must have qualification for administrators. An organization is a combination of individuals, technology, and structures and processes regulating individuals’ relations with each other and with their profession. Organizational structure and processes have an important impact on the attitudes and behaviors of the employees in the organization. Therefore, organizational structure and processes cannot be regarded as separate from each other in terms of organizational change. Organizational development does not foresee a change only in individuals, technology, structure or processes, but a change in all of these as a whole (Friedlander & Brown, 1978 as cited in Balcı, 2002).

Owens (1987) defines organizational change as “a premeditated, planned, unusual and authentic effort that contributes to the organization to reach newer goals or to achieve the existing goals in a more effective manner” (cited in Altunay, Arlı, & Yalçınkaya, 2012). In general, it is possible to speak of two types of change: planned and unplanned. “Planned change” is desirable for organizations, and means a change realized with the participation of and support of the members of an organization. “Unplanned change,” on the other hand, is defined as inevitable change undergone by organizations, consciously or not, due to unexpected circumstances (Escalente, 2005; Özdemir, 2000).

Change is a difficult and a painful process for organizations. When goals of the change are in unity with the goals of employees, change is better supported by the employees (Özkan, 2004; West-Burnham, 1991 as cited in Töremen, 2002). Armstrong (1992) considers change management from the perspective of processes that ensure an organization’s making significant changes in its culture, policy, structure and system determining the strategies to be applied when doing this, and defines change management as bringing such processes in compliance with change (as cited in Helvacı, 2005; Taş, 2009). Factors forcing the education system to change provide school administrators with new roles and responsibilities to fulfil in order to manage this process of change effectively, and requires them to gain necessary knowledge and skills to this end (Gökçe, 2005). Many developed countries, notably the United Kingdom, witness an increase in educational reforms to improve school performance (Harris, 2000). Many concepts are used for such reforms to improve processes and products of education such as school restructuring, school reform or school development (Goldenberg, 2003). In this regard, various activities are implemented to improve and develop current schools, for example “school development,” “school-centred management,” “learning school,” and “total quality management” on one hand, whereas on the other hand “alternative school” models are being discussed (Şişman, 2002).

Speaking of change in a school organization, the leading parameter is inevitably considered to be the school administration, namely school administrator and its deputies. The common understanding that ‘a school is as good as its administrator’ indicates the impact of the managerial competence, symbolized with the identity of the school administrator, on general perception of the school in the environment (Aksu, 2004). The position of school administrators’ response to such expectations or validation of this perception may be associated with their being open to change. School administrators are expected not only to exhibit leadership or management ability in relation with openness to change, but also to orchestrate starting, managing and evaluating the change process (Gümüşeli, 2009; Wallace, 2004).

There are several studies conducted as regards organizational change. Some are theoretical studies on change management, change and leadership in educational institutions, management of organizational change, change in education systems, effective schools in the process of change, organizational culture in the process of change, roles of school administrators and teachers in change and innovation, and resistance to change in the process of change (Ada & Akan 2007; Beycioğlu & Aslan, 2010; Çalık, 2003; Çolakoğlu, 2005; Gizir, 2008; Güçlü & Şehitoğlu, 2006; Şahin, 2007; Tunçer, 2013). Besides, there are various quantitative studies on school administrators' competencies for managing change, role of leadership in change, administrators' readiness attitudes towards change, strategic planning and organizational change (Akkoç & Ergen, 2015; Argon & Özçelik, 2007; Kondakçı, Zayim, & Çalışkan, 2010; Saylı & Tüfekçi, 2008), and qualitative studies on the use of planned change process for school improvement, managers' views on school change processes, and views of primary school administrators about innovative changes in education (Gökçe et al., 2013; Madden, 2008; Uğurlu, Doğan, Dağdelen, & Çetinkaya, 2013). A review of the literature has not revealed any study examining the views of primary school administrators on change in schools and change management practices. Besides, studies found in the literature investigating change in schools are mostly theoretical or quantitative studies, and this subject has not been sufficiently dealt with from a qualitative perspective. Therefore it is deemed appropriate to use qualitative methods to study the views of school administrators about change, as well as how change is managed in schools, by an in-depth examination of school administrators' experiences, perceptions and understanding on change. Revealing the views of school administrators on change along with strategies, problems and solutions about change management, it is believed that this qualitative study will shed light on similar studies in the future.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to determine school administrators' views on change, and to reveal the strategies they used for change management. Thus, the study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the views of primary school administrators on change?
2. According to primary school administrators, on which subjects do schools need to change?
3. Which situations do primary school administrators consider as an indicator of the need for changes in schools?
4. Which strategies do primary school administrators apply for change?

5. Do primary school administrators experience resistance during the organizational change process? If so, how is this problem managed?
6. Do primary school administrators have plans or projects for change?

### **Method**

Qualitative data collection techniques were used to implement this study, which was conducted in order to understand primary school administrators' views on change, as well as their strategies for change management. Qualitative studies are preferred for systematic examination of meanings revealed as a result of experiences of people who are subjects of the research (Ekiz, 2003). Important characteristics of qualitative research methods include sensitivity to the natural environment, the participant role of the researcher, holistic nature, revealing perceptions, flexible research design, and following an inductive analysis (Uzuner, 1997; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In this regard, qualitative studies ensure sensitivity to the social context in which the research is created (Kuş, 2003), and provide opportunities to see and interpret the reality (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Qualitative studies are rather more interested in process than products or outcomes. Hence, meanings are more important in qualitative studies (Merriam, 1988). Semi-structured interviews are mostly preferred in qualitative studies due to their certain level of standardized yet flexible structure, since they overcome limitations of surveys and tests requiring filled-in or written answers, and they help to obtain in-depth information (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Data were collected using the interviewing method, so as to assess the opinions of primary education administrators and relevant situations in a realistic and holistic manner within a natural environment. The study was constructed on the basis of phenomenology pattern among qualitative research methods. Phenomenological approach allows for researching phenomena that are recognized, yet not fully known in detail. The aim of such studies is to reveal an individual's experiences and perceptions about a phenomenon along with the meaning attributed by the same individual (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Semi-structured interview form was used to collect data, and seven questions were posed to participants. Obtained responses were analyzed using content analysis methods, and the results presented in data tables.

### **Participants**

Among purposeful sampling methods, homogenous sampling technique was used in this study to create an appropriate segment of the population subject of observation (Sencer, 1989). The aim being to define a specific sub-group through small, homogenous sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Participants of this study are five primary school administrators working in the Menteşe district of Muğla

province in 2014. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis from a total of 38 primary schools in the district.

### **Data Collection Tool and Data Collection**

A seven question interview form was developed as the means to collect data for the study. The first question in the form obtains personal information about the participants, while the other six were semi-structured questions aimed towards the research problems. Interviews conducted with semi-structured questions are neither as strict as interviews with fully structured questions, nor as flexible as interviews conducted with unstructured questions. This study makes use of semi-structured interviews in order to provide the researcher with such flexibility. Special attention was paid to make sure the interview questions were easily understandable, to ensure they were not multi-dimensional, and not to canalize the interviewee towards a specific path (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It was intended to learn detailed views of the school administrators about the main subject of this research. A literature review was conducted to aid construction of the questions based on the research problems, which was followed by meetings held with school administrators. A draft interview form prepared by the researcher was reviewed by university lecturers from the relevant area. Comments and recommendations from both the practicing school administrators and the subject area experts contributed to the content validity. A preliminary application was completed with two school administrators in order to see whether there were any problems with the comprehension of and responses to the questions. The preliminary application suggested no problems in terms of comprehension or providing response to questions. School administrations that participated in the preliminary application are excluded from the sampling group. The internal validity of the study was ensured through reviews by subject area experts and participants' confirmation, and detailed description of the data was used to ensure external validity. Semi-structured questions on the interview form included the following: What are the views of primary school administrators on change? What do primary school administrators understand of 'change in schools'? On which areas do schools need change? Which situations are considered as indicators for the need for change in schools? Which strategies are used by primary school administrators for change? Do primary school administrators experience resistance when implementing organizational change? How are problems resolved? Does the school have a plan or project for change?

This study was conducted with active, personal participation of the researcher. The data collection tool was personally handed to the school administrators, who were visited by pre-arranged appointment. The researcher explained the importance of receiving sincere and accurate responses to the questions, and provided the school

administrators with the data collection tools. School administrators were then informed that they could respond to the questions in writing or through face-to-face recording. Face-to-face meetings were held with the school administrators on a preferred date at their schools. A second visit to the schools showed that two school administrators answered the semi-structured interview forms in writing. The written forms were reviewed in the presence of the school administrators, and ambiguous points clarified through additional questioning. The remaining three school administrators preferred face-to-face interviews with audio recording. The interviews lasted 30 minutes on average. The researcher paid due diligence not to steer the participants during the interviews, and tried to keep the interview on track, and to provide equal voice and time to all participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The interviews were transcribed using word processing software, and printed versions were given to the participants for their confirmation.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis focused on the questions from the interview form, and direct quotes were used from time to time in order to clearly reflect the views of the school administrators. For data presentation, the researcher selected quotes on the basis of being striking (different opinion), explanatory (compliance with theme), variety, and extreme examples (Ünver, Bümen, & Başbay, 2010). Primarily, responses of the participants were categorized and combined under the research questions, and the data processed using computer software. A total of 30 pages of data were obtained from the interviews. All records were examined by another researcher and compared with the original researcher's notes in order to ensure data reliability (Uzuner & Çolak 2004) and to ensure the resultant data was indeed workable by the researcher. Data were read in a careful manner, and notes were made next to responses in parentheses. Later, these notes in parentheses were written down for each research problem, and grouped on the basis of similarity. Taking these notes as basis, codes were created directly from the data using induction. Coding was conducted in parallel with finding themes, rearranging data based on themes and codes, and interpreting findings. A flexible approach was followed in view of the uniqueness of each qualitative study. The next step was to carefully review the coded expressions, their rearrangement based on similarities and differences, and the elimination of irrelevant expressions. Coded expressions were restructured using more concise expressions with the help of the original interview form so as to create themes. Attention was paid to create different themes within a unity that would explain the data collected under the study. Questions and themes were studied by the researcher and a subject-area expert for the reliability of the study, and issues were jointly reviewed and amended accordingly. Reliability was calculated based on the formula "Reliability = number of agreements /



(agreements + disagreements) x 100” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Reliability ratio of the study is 84 percent. Groups of expressions and data were reviewed one last time, and the themes were finalized. The researcher paid attention to organize themes in a unique manner with no personal interpretation. Codes were gathered to have descriptive and content analyses of themes (categories) that would form the main outline of the research findings. Descriptive analysis is a technique used to summarize and interpret the obtained data based on predetermined themes, where direct quotations are used to reveal participants’ views in an attractive manner, and to interpret obtained findings in a cause-and-effect relationship framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Themes and sub-themes obtained at the end of data analyses are as follows:

### **Themes and Sub-Themes upon Data Analysis**

1. General views of primary school administrators about change
2. Views of primary school administrators about the need for change
  - 2.1. Views about certain situations in the school requiring change
  - 2.2. Views about indicators of the need for change
3. Views of primary school administrators about implementation of change
  - 3.1. Views of primary school administrators on the strategies used to respond to the need for change
  - 3.2. Views about resistance to change, and how this is managed
  - 3.3. Views about plans or projects about change

Findings of the research are presented in the following section in the aforementioned order of themes and sub-themes.

### **Findings**

Participants’ views were relayed on the basis of confidentiality, and no names were mentioned of either institutions or administrators. Participants were coded as M1, M2, ... (M = school administrator). This section provides demographic information about the participant school administrators, and their responses to questions categorized on the basis of themes and sub-themes.

Of participant school administrators, one is female and the others are male. Their length of service in the teaching profession ranges from 15 to 35 years, while they have worked as administrators for between eight to 18 years.



## General Views of Primary School Administrators about Change

Under this theme, general views of primary school administrators about change were analyzed overall. Concepts deduced from responses along with brief views of the school administrators are given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Views on the Change Phenomenon*

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Smooth transition	X				
Update			X		
Improvement			X		X
Process	X				
Look for the best				X	
Philosophical aspect		X			

About this theme, some school administrators have emphasized that change in education should not be perceived only as creating change in physical terms, since change in physical terms means mainly compulsory and planned activities that have to be done in schools, while some administrators have stated that change in schools should be physical as well. One school administrator (M1) said about physical change in schools: “We have physical deficiencies in the school. We do not have a sports hall. We do not have a hall for theatre performances. We use open spaces. There are classrooms everywhere. Other spaces have been neglected. Students study mathematics in the physical education areas. It is necessary to have physical change in schools in order to train students as a whole.” Other school administrators (M4, M5) also agreed with this and had similar opinions. Another school administrator (M2) stated that physical improvements should not be considered as change: “A school administration may say that they have had the school repainted, the roof repaired, the garden landscaped, or a ramp constructed for handicapped students. We perceive it as a change in the school; yet none of these are changes in a real sense. These are certain, compulsory things that should be done in a planned manner within a school.”

One school administrator (M1) stated that “change in education means things related to instruction, and these things are not immediate things yet they should be handled in the process.” This school administrator thinks that many things should change when, for instance, curricula change. There are other school administrators in agreement with this opinion (M4). This finding is also supported by [Balcı \(2002\)](#) stating that “organizational change essentially means a change in structure, processes and behaviors.” Another school administrator (M2) emphasized the importance of teachers for change: “Teachers are the ones who will implement the change in education. Teachers need to constantly renew themselves, and keep pace with change.” Another school administrator (M3) agreed with this idea of change in practice, whilst

school administrator (M5) mentioned the need for a change in the culture, stating “We need to create a cultural change in schools. Perspectives of teachers are so limited; we have so-called ‘classical’ teachers, and even administrators, who exhibit very traditional behaviors.” Since structural and physical opportunities are somewhat limited in schools, schools generally focus on physical arrangements. According to the school administrators, change in schools does not merely mean physical change. There also needs to be change in processes, practices, teacher competencies, and culture as well. Taylor’s scientific view of dividing change into small manageable pieces is old-fashioned. Instead, what needs to happen should be to manage the dynamics of change instead of the pieces (Kerman, 2016).

**Views of Primary School Administrators about the Need for Change**

This theme analyses school administrators’ views on the need for change in schools. It has been determined that school administrators’ views are grouped around two sub-themes: certain situations in the school requiring change, and indicators of the need for change. Hence, Table 2 and Table 3 provide the concepts deduced from the responses of school administrators about the need for change, and the views of school administrators.

**Views about certain situations in the school requiring change.**

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Socialization of students	X				
Effective use of technology	X				
Trust in teachers		X			
Students’ behavior gains		X			
Arrangements regarding physical structure			X		
Instructional practices			X		
No need for change				X	
Change of mentality	X	X			X
Regulations					X
Distribution of responsibility and authorization					X

As a response to this sub-theme, school administrators have mentioned the need for change in terms of socialization of students, physical structure of schools, technology use, trusting in teachers, gains, mentality and regulations. One school administrator (M1) emphasized the importance of students’ socialization within this age of technological transformation: “We need to change in schools if we do not want to lose our students. I am saying this for a reason. Students spend time in front

of their personal computers before they come to school. Technology is very useful, of course; but we are losing our kids gradually. They just sit in front of a table. They do not have a social life. They play games, they play football using their computers. We need to keep up with that age, but we cannot lose our values.” Another school administrator (M2) indicated the need for change in terms of trusting teachers and students’ acquisitions: “The important thing in education is acquisition. We need to change in order to provide students with these features. Teachers use every means available for this. They should do that. But we do not trust teachers, and expect average behaviors from them.” This finding is supported by [Lawler and Worley’s \(2006\)](#) opinion: Regardless of the things aimed at with organizational change or the content of the planned changes, the most important issue to remember is that man has the leading role in all such changes.” From a physical perspective in terms of school change, school administrator M3 emphasized the need for physical change in schools: “The exterior wall of our school is worn-out, our garden is rank and neglected, there are problems in retrieving old documents from the archive, and all these need to change.” School administrator M4 stated that they did not need any change: “I don’t think we particularly need a change at the school. As a matter of fact, we need to put certain education systems and policies into practice. Our personnel structure also allows us to apply modern practices. We have strong and efficient communication among employees.” School administrator M5 stated that there was actually a need for change in teachers’ qualifications, their mentality, and the regulations: “There needs to be a mentality change in the school. I mean doing things out of routine. We still have traditional teachers or administrators exhibiting traditional, routine behaviors. We are no different than gold miners sifting silt from one sieve to another. We are only following the traditional method - change is needed in responsibility and delegation of authority in order to change the atmosphere of the school. This will bring about a democratic atmosphere. Do schools need to be democratized? Yes, definitely. Yet, the regulations do not allow this.” Similar to these views, M1 and M2 also emphasized the need for a change in teacher qualifications. It may not be possible to achieve the requested change, even if the organizational structure changes, unless employees’ individual perceptions change. Change in education should be arranged in a flexible manner, instead of achieving predetermined, fixed targets ([Fullan, 2007](#)). In order to ensure a successful change in schools, it is imperative to set long-term targets that will contribute to employees’ supporting change. A comprehensive plan is very useful to benefit from all dynamics of an organization. Yet, it requires a to-the-point, decisive, and broad work; hence requiring time and resources ([Pritchard, 2010](#)). School administrators state that they need change in their schools for technology, regulations, general understanding, practices, teacher behaviors, responsibilities and culture. As [Werkman \(2009\)](#) mentions, each organization has its unique problems and

characteristics; hence requiring different approaches and interventions for change. Not simply the best strategy should be preferred for change, but the most appropriate change strategy.

### Views about indicators of the need for change.

Table 3  
*Indicators of the Need for Change*

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Contemporary comparisons	X				
Satisfaction survey results			X		
Demands			X		
Achievement					X
Heartedness					X

In response to this sub-theme, school administrators listed indicators for the need of change as contemporary comparison, satisfaction survey, demands (e.g. student, teachers), achievement status of schools and students, as well as the heartedness of teachers and students. One school administrator (M1) stated that we should compare the current status of school with contemporary developments as an indicator of the change in schools: “We should look if we are compliant with the age. If we are behind the times, the country will be behind the times. We are preparing our students for the exams. Other areas are left behind. We cannot train our students as a whole.” It may be an important finding to see school administrators follow up contemporary developments for change. It is not possible for an organization to be in real harmony with its environment as long as it continues to operate with past beliefs in this strong era of change (Toffler, 1989). School administrator M2 similarly stated that an indicator for the need for change in schools should be the review of and comparisons made about the education systems worldwide. School administrator M3 mentioned the results of satisfaction surveys applied in schools as an indicator of the need for change in schools. School administrator M2 stated that another indicator of the need for change in schools were demands and requests from the school administrator: “The indicator of change is students. I receive messages from my students. I am asking them which courses they most like. They respond physical education or extracurricular activities. Can you practice them? No.” There are other school administrators that consider achievement as an indicator for change. School administrator M4 said: “Need for change comes automatically if there is no indicator for achievement from an outcome-oriented perspective, or if there is inefficiency. We may talk about a problem if no positive improvement is experienced in students’ behaviors, or if similar negativities are experienced frequently. This means there is a

need for change.” Similarly, school administrator (M1) stated “We give importance to cognitive areas, yet we are still ranked at 36<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> in exams like PISA.” School administrators mentioned that disheartenment might also be considered as an indicator for change. School administrator M5 illustrated this opinion as follows: “We may easily say that productivity and efficiency decreases when things are monotonous or routine. We start dragging our feet. You are no longer efficient in the classroom. Frankly, disheartenment in a school may be perceived as an indicator for the need for change. Non-participation or lack of team spirit are examples of disheartenment.”

**Views of Primary School Administrators about the Implementation of Change**

This theme analyses school administrators’ views on the implementation of change in schools. It has been determined that school administrators’ views are grouped around three sub-themes: strategies used to respond to the need for change, resistance to change and how this is managed, and plans or projects about change certain situations in the school requiring change. Hence, Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide the concepts deduced from responses of school administrators about the implementation of change, and the views of school administrators.

**Views of primary school administrators on the strategies used to respond to the need for change.**

Table 4  
*Strategies Used for Change*

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Stakeholders	X	X			
Effective communication	X			X	
Organizational culture	X			X	
Participation in decision-making				X	
Team spirit					X
Neighbor organizations	X		X		
Specialization					X
Effective leadership					X
Guidance for teachers	X				

School administrator M1 mentioned certain practices for change in schools: “We discuss these situations in the teachers’ committee. I am always in the teachers’ room. I guide them. I tell them to consider school as a family. I try to create cooperative behaviors. I get help from the school environment. There is active participation from the environment in this school. The socio-economic level of the school environment is quite high.” School administrator M2 said “We do not receive much support from the [Ministry of] National Education because our school is fairly wealthy. Many

works are supported by parents or major tradesmen in the schools' locality. The school is in good relations with the local environment. For example, the school cafeteria was established with the help of the school environment. Similarly, computers and projection devices in the classrooms are bought by the parents." School administrator M3 followed a similar approach to school administrator M2 in terms of realizing change in schools. M3 said "I try to increase the number of factors that will support me in areas I would like to change. Among them are establishing contact with non-governmental organizations and requesting support from universities and municipalities." School administrator M4 said "It is not possible to realize change in schools in all areas. The school administrator may change and transform the school culture, and employees may agree with the decisions about change." It is seen that the school administrators try to establish an organizational climate to create and manage change in schools, and to involve employees and other stakeholders in this process. Efforts for change should be handled in order to improve organizational performance and efficiency. Change should be supported by strategic decisions and structural arrangements. Efforts for change should be continued through teamwork and cooperation (Düren, 2000). School administrator M5 stated that one realized the need for change in schools through demonstrating leadership behaviors: "Schools need a leader in such situations. It is crucial that the leader is respected by the teachers. For instance, when the administrator makes a decision, teachers should be able to support the administrator because he/she is fair in decision making, even if they do not like the administrator as a person. This is what I am trying to achieve in my school."

**Views about resistance to change, and how this is managed.**

Table 5  
*Resistance to Change, and How This is Managed*

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
<b>A- Reasons for resistance</b>					
Habits	X				
High-level ego					X
Middle age group					X
<b>B- Solutions</b>					
Persuasion	X	X	X	X	X
Authority	X	X	X		
Leadership			X		X
Communication			X		X

Regarding resistance to change, and how this is managed, all school administrators, except for M4, stated that they encountered resistance to change in the school. School administrator M2 explained this as follows: "For example, I can encounter resistance

from teachers about the curriculum. Our curriculum has changed. It has been several years since it changed, but we are still having difficulty in applying it. When you ask teachers, they say they apply it in various ways, or that sometimes parents want it differently.” School administrators listed habits, high-level ego (M1, M5), and particularly middle-ages teachers (M5) for factors pertinent to the resistance to change. School administrators also stated that they used persuasion techniques, leadership skills and communication to deal with resistance to change, which they considered as a negative situation, yet they would use their authority even if they did not want to when required (M1, M2, M3). School administrator M1 explained the influence of habits on resistance to change as follows: “We have a teacher with 40 years of service. S/he uses all kinds of tools, very open to innovations; but our problem is that we cannot give up our habits. We cannot drop our habits. Our preference for convenience and our long-term habits have a negative impact on our behaviors.” It is understood that there is resistance to change in schools. Resistance to change can be caused by many factors including ambiguity, lack of communication, habits and lack of trust. Managing resistance to change is the most difficult stage of the change process (Şahin, 2011). All five school administrators stated that they preferred to use persuasion to deal with resistance to change. School administrators (M1, M3 and M5) stated that they also used leadership skills to solve resistance problems in addition to communication channels and persuasion.

### Views about plans or projects about change.

Table 6  
*Views About Plans or Projects About Change*

Concepts	School Administrators				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Strategic plans	X	X	X		
Projects		X			
OGYE teams		X			
Situational behaviors not based on plans	X	X	X	X	X

Regarding this sub-theme, three school administrators (M1, M2, and M3) stated that they had strategic plans, mostly covering physical changes. All participant school administrators said that sometimes they acted according to the situation they were in, and tried to instigate changes that were not based on the plan. However school administrator M1 considered planned change as more efficient: “We do not want to start random changes. But of course sometimes we do things extemporarily. But things we do based on a plan are far more efficient.” It is possible to say that a planned change may be more effective. Yet, according to Çalıřkan (2007), organizational change may be a realized plan or unplanned, macro or micro, sudden or extended



over time, proactive or reactive, active or passive, gradually improving or radical, or comprehensive or within a narrow framework. School administrator M2 indicated OGYEs (School Development Management Team) to ensure change in schools, yet these teams have not been able to perform functionally due to several reasons. Hoşgörür (2014) concluded in a study that “school development management teams have not been able to achieve communication, cooperation and coordination as much as intended, and teams have focused their activities on receiving financial support from the environment yet failed to emphasize activities to create change, to improve or to develop circumstances in schools.” Similarly, Şahin (2006) indicated that “determination of objectives in a school, as well as the preparation of school development plans are mostly done by one or two individuals, both administrators and teachers are unenthusiastic about the creation of school development management teams (OGYEs), and that is why OGYEs are not comprised of enthusiastic members.” School administrator M3 stated that schools were not quite free in terms of realizing change except for examples such as being authorized and making decisions about painting external walls etc. School administrator M5 indicated that plans and projects on the change in schools remained on paper mainly, subject to basic checks like “Is it done?” or “Reviewed and approved,” yet no follow-up was ever done comparing the situation of institutions, for instance, in four years’ time. School administrator M2 agreed with this opinion with similar ideas, saying that activities realized in the school were mainly individual projects, however it was not possible to review and evaluate these activities since they were not written down and reported as required. Efforts for change should be handled to improve organizational performance and efficiency. Change should be supported by strategic decisions and structural arrangements. Efforts for change should continue through teamwork and cooperation (Düren, 2000).

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Like the other organizations founded so as to satisfy the needs of the society, educational organizations, which were founded in order to fulfill the educational needs of the society, have been under the pressure of a continuous change and innovation for the last fifty years (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 2002; Wallace, 2004). Findings obtained from this current research indicate that school administrators are open to change, and think that there needs to be change in schools. Aydoğan’s study (2007) also concludes that administrators and teachers think positively about the idea of change. According to Gumuseli (2009) and Wallace (2004), administrators’ openness to change should not only include administrative skills but also it should contain the leadership and administration conducted by coordinating and complying with the related units and employments in all the processes and stages lasting from

the beginning of change to the evaluation stage. According to school administrators, change is an improvement process smoothly conducted through intentionally correcting or updating a system or removing something that is mal-functioning. In other words, school administrators consider change as the renewal and improvement of conditions in a school. School administrators think that real change is not merely correction or improvement in physical terms, but all arrangements and improvements made to the educational system and instructional activities in schools. In accordance with the findings of this current study, [Grogan \(2004\)](#) has asserted that all the efforts for change will be pointless unless students have a qualified education. From this point of view, [Fullan \(2002\)](#) has remarked that administrators are required to put a great effort on increasing the success of each and every student. Therefore, in today's educational systems it cannot be regarded as efficacious if administrators just situate the teachers in their classes, supply required materials and instruments for courses and maintain teachers to continue their professions in the school. Authorization of the school administrators in terms of realizing change in schools is very limited. It may be possible to provide the school administrators with more authority so as to allow them to work autonomous to realize the change. [Hoşgörür and Apikoğlu \(2013\)](#) state that inability of school administrators to make free decisions about managerial issues will cause them to lose command of their work, which in turn will lead to their losing interest in other tasks within the school and cause insensitivity. In this regard, in order to effectively manage change in schools, certain powers and authority of senior management may be transferred to school administrators in an understanding of school-based management.

Teachers are the main actors to apply change in schools. School administrators think that primarily, teachers should be the ones to bring themselves up-to-date. As can be understood from these expressions of school administrators, teachers fail to provide the required support to their schools in terms of change. A study by [Gelen and Beyazit \(2007\)](#) found that teachers are not sufficiently qualified to keep up with the changes in training programmes, which is in parallel with the finding of this study. Similarly, according to an evaluation report conducted by [OECD and UNESCO \(2001\)](#), it can be identified that politicians and society have quite high expectations from teachers as a model, social leader and professional. Moreover, teachers' openness to change can be regarded as one of the most important potential variables which might affect the success of change that has been carried out in schools or that is intended to be actualized ([Griffith, 2010](#); [Lee, 2000](#); [Waller, 2008](#)). During reform periods, with rapid changes happening every second, it is crucial to develop the human factor as well as the organizational model. Many changes in educational systems have been doomed to failure since they have not been supported in conjunction with developing the

human factor (Bursalioglu, 2002). The person who will apply an innovation, together with a change in an environment of school or classroom is definitely a teacher. An attempt which is not adopted by the teacher or whose innovation is not believed by the teacher might fail beforehand (Fullan, 2001). Salvason (2005), who has stated that especially teachers' participation in decisions, might have a positive effect on providing the acceptance of the changes in schools, has asserted that in a contrary case, teachers' sense of responsibility towards applying the decisions others have made and thereby their collaboration might decrease. Teachers should be involved in all stages of the process of change. Teachers' opinions, needs and participation should be given more importance in the design and implementation of change. Incentives may be provided to teachers in the form of course schedule, coursework, working environment, prizes, etc., for those who actively participate and make an effort in the process of change in schools.

School administrators compare international educational activities and their schools, and consider the differences as indicators for change. Besides, they also take into consideration and monitor the results of satisfaction surveys administered in schools, demands and requests from students and teachers, school and student achievement levels as well as the disheartedness of students and teachers. It is understood that the needs for change in primary schools mainly emerge from the environment and based on the demands inside the school. Organizational change can be expressed to take place in dynamical environments in conjunction with social actions and interactions (Rooney et al., 2010). The change which will be actualized in schools is a complicated, time-consuming and difficult work (Bradley, 1992). This finding is in parallel with reasons for change as emphasized by Toremén (2002), who brings environmental and in-house pressure to the foreground among the sources of change. The participant teachers also emphasized that change emerged from environmental and in-house demands and requests. Findings of the study also overlap with Holberton (2002): "Leaders should consider change as their hardest and most important tasks, should associate change with business, and convince the employees that organizational renewal is a desirable thing."

This research study found that schools need change in terms of regulations, trust in teachers, technology use, socialization of students, mentality, and physical structure. George, White, and Schlawfer (2007) have stated that there has been a great deal of change attempts regarding the education which are planned comprehensively in the last twenty-five years; however most of these attempts have succeeded in a rather limited proportion. With regards to this, Awbrey (2005) has stated that the most important obstacle for organizational change, generally containing the educational innovation attempts is that the significant effect of organizational culture is not taken

into account in the process of change and he has also asserted that in order to provide a successful and continuous change, it is required that the cultural and structural approaches towards change are integrated systematically. Moreover, it is remarked that actualizing a change and its' being long-lasting depends on changing the values and beliefs of employees working in the organization and thereby, underlying the organizational behaviors, the basic premises, which are quite difficult for even the employees working in the organization to be known or recognized. Awbrey, who has expressed that changing the premises of employees working in the organization, might cause to change their internal images regarding their organization and objectives of the organization has emphasized that the success of the change depends on that the organization is conceptualized, comprehended and accepted by the employees.

Nonetheless, it was seen that school administrators did not have much freedom in terms of change in schools. School administrators do not have the authorization to create and implement change in every area. Şahin (2013) indicates that authorization and limited resources that school administrators have make it necessary to implement certain improvement activities in schools through centralised-bureaucratic structures. Among them are improving physical structure, providing educational technologies, teacher training and professional development, finding additional funding for schools, decreasing class sizes or increasing the number of personnel. "Improving physical conditions," "benefitting more from educational technologies," and "increasing the number of personnel" are the main issues that school administrators would like to address, but cannot do so. This shows that change initiatives in school will not be successful enough unless supported by the system (Nehring & O'Brien, 2012). In order to implement physical change in the school, school administrators receive support from the tradesmen in the school environment, as well as from parents (stakeholders), and try to increase the number of factors that may provide support for the school. Schools may be faced with challenges in finding financial resources particularly for physical change. Schools may be supported by senior management in terms of funding, and financial resource allocation to schools may be adjusted based on school needs. Other strategies used by school administrators include effective communication, creating team spirit, active participation of employees in decision making, providing guidance to employees, leading change, and changing the organizational culture. Besides, school administrators use such strategies as creating a team spirit through efficient communication, involving employees in making decisions, guiding employees, leading the change, and altering the organizational culture. Teachers' openness to change is a strong predictor for their openness to collaboration. Findings of several studies on change in education and school improvement emphasize the importance of collaboration among teachers in schools on the success of change

(Barth, 1990; Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001; Day, 1999; Fullan, 2003, 2007; Harris, 2002). Collaboration and team spirit created in schools helps teachers to overcome the challenges brought about by change (Briscoe & Peters, 1997). Patterson and Rolheiser (2004) list learning about the change and creating a culture for change as the most important two factors among team-building strategies within organizations. They state that this also has a positive impact on student achievement in the case of schools. Hence, it is possible to say that the more teachers are informed about change, both processes and outcomes will be more efficient, and the process for change will survive.

According to the findings of this current study, it can be asserted that resistance to change is encountered in the schools. Change is not only related to the change in the appearances of individuals, events or things but it is also attached to the change in the ideas. The perception manners of employees about the change are the most important factor determining their reactions against the change and the size of this reaction. Rue and Byars (1990), summarize this condition as follows. If employees are not conscious of how the change will affect them, they will surely resist changing or with the best estimation, they will remain neutral. According to administrators, resistance to change is common mostly among teachers belonging to the middle-age group. Most important reasons for resistance to change include employees' old habits, employees' high-level ego, and lack of democratic culture in schools. Sisman (1994) also highlights the risky nature of change and innovation for organizations and individuals, and claims that the biggest obstacle facing organizational change and development efforts is psycho-social structure and culture. Basaran (1992) recommends training, participation, communication and communicative systems, while Lunenburg and Orstein (1996, as cited in Cinar, 2005) emphasizes effective communication, support to facilitate change, reward for success, planning, and force when required. However, in Turkey, while teachers are having in-service training, the initiative of administrators is rather limited in terms of both authorization and resource. Nevertheless, the development of teachers should be given importance; their developing themselves should be followed and evaluated. For the continuity of the development and change, learning and development should be shared; the individual who has developed himself should be encouraged (Bubb & Earley, 2009). School administrators generally use the persuasion technique (applying pressure) to solve the problem of resistance to change in schools. Some school administrators try to solve such problems by communicating and demonstrating leadership behaviors. All school administrators said that they did not use their authority to solve resistance to change problems in their schools, but might use this power if and when required. Measures may be taken to raise teachers' awareness on the subjects of current or planned change in schools (e.g. curriculum, technology use).

Administrators have stated that five-year strategic plans have been designed in order to actualize the change in schools. Similarly, Yanpar, Kilic, and Uredi (2010) have concluded in their study that primary and secondary school administrators have enough knowledge regarding the concept of strategic planning and its purposes, however there have been some problems originating from the lacking of training in terms of application and economic deficiencies and besides, these problems can be handled via in-service training and financial support. Moreover, Ozgan, Bas, and Sabancı (2011) have asserted in their study that the purposes taking place in the strategic plans of schools mostly consist of academic achievement, social activities and physical requirements. It has been determined that all in all, schools have reached their short-term and middle-term purposes in managing vocational guidance and developing technological infrastructure. According to Kocatepe's (2010) study, it has been determined that primary and secondary school administrators generally have an optimistic attitude towards strategic planning. According to the administrators, apart from strategic plans, change is also endeavored with unplanned projects which have been developed according to the conditions. Furthermore, the strategic plans, which have been prepared so as to actualize the change in schools, are not evaluated realistically at the end of the terms. Similarly, according to Ozen's (2011) study, it has been concluded that strategic plans prepared by schools have not reached their purposes, the specified purposes and their conditions for actualization have not been followed and evaluated by the organizations of schools. It is seen that there are five-year plans to implement change in schools. Additionally, schools try to create change either through implementing projects or sometimes in an unplanned manner. Nevertheless, strategic plans of schools are said to be not evaluated in a realistic way at the end of each semester, or that implemented projects are not reported to provincial education directorates except for a few good example; thus, they do not contribute to the efforts. Demirkaya (2007) has asserted in his study that when the administrators express their opinions, they have stated that strategic planning is mostly a work just on paper. Moreover, enough participation is not provided in the planning studies and plans do not satisfy the needs of the schools. Teachers are not enthusiastic about designing projects in schools. They mostly perceive such activities as an extra burden. The strategic plan is the most important long-term plan prepared to address change in schools. Yet, such five-year plans in schools are generally theoretical since they are not inspected as they should be. Strategic plans of schools should be created to include more realistic and achievable objectives. Plans should be diligently inspected and followed-up regularly.

In order for strategic planning in schools to be successful, stakeholders in schools (e.g. administrators, teachers, parents, students) should believe in the importance and



value of strategic planning; in other words, they should have a positive perception/belief about strategic planning. According to Özdemir (2000), when an organization's structure changes, the new structure may not bring about the anticipated organizational benefit unless the relevant staff changes their perspective and understanding. Hence, it will be difficult to succeed in strategic planning activities in a school without positive perception, belief and support of the elements of the system. When the related literature is investigated, it can be indicated that teachers having a high level of self-efficacy are more open to new ideas (Jerald, 2007), more eager to adopt the change (Allinder, 1994 as cited in Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), more prone to apply new teaching strategies and besides they can accommodate themselves more easily to the change (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011). Having strategic planning merely as a legal requirement will not result in any positive change in schools. There are many councils, committees and teams within schools which may contribute to the management of change, yet they work very inefficiently in most schools. It is possible, however, to activate these councils, committees and teams to work effectively on creating change in schools, as well as for evaluating and following-up the outcomes. Besides, it may be necessary to inform the teachers and raise awareness on the importance of change for their school and organizational goals, and also to equip them with the required knowledge and skills in order to manage planned or sudden changes within their organization.

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