



Perceptions of Workforce Diversity in High Schools and Diversity Management: A Qualitative Analysis *

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions about high school staff diversity, potential benefits and drawbacks of diversity and administrative applications and policies for diversity in the view of administrators and teachers. Survey method was employed in the research as well as the qualitative method. The research group consisted of total 24 administrators and teachers from state high schools in Kütahya, Kayseri and Van provinces. Eight individuals from each province (four randomly chosen administrators and four randomly chosen teachers) were interviewed. The semi-structured interview method was employed for data gathering. Descriptive content analyses were used for data analysis. The following results were reached: The administrators and teachers generally had positive views about high school staff diversity. As a result, it was seen that such diversity brought critical benefits for both employees and schools and at the same time, it caused certain problems. In addition, administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools were generally positive, but sometimes negative.

Keywords

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Introduction

Constant changes in social, political, technological and economic world together with globalization influence organizational philosophies, cultures and strategies. Such a mental change in organizations has made human resources the main component of production and services (Bhadury, Mighty, & Damar, 2000, p. 143). In this process, unique features of workers as well as their competencies have also gained importance. This case makes employee diversity in organizations significant and entails the necessity of new management styles. In this context, one of the newly proposed approaches is diversity management.

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Diversity is of great importance for today's organizations. As organizations extend geographically and free movement of workforce increases, interaction with broader identity and diversity is getting more and more critic and this case causes continuous diversity of workforce composition. All the factors (workers, clients, shareholders, suppliers and etc.) included in the production and consumption process in the globalizing world are parts of cultural diversity (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998; Mor Barak, 2014; Zenger, 1995 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2011a;).

Basic diverse features of employees are as follows (Memduhoğlu, 2011b): (a) *Demographic diversity*: It includes constant or permanent features such as race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, age, experience, hometown or the place an employee feels belong to and physical features (for example, physical fitness degree for work). (b) *Socio-cultural diversity*: This means the already acquired and currently adopted values such as religion, philosophical and political belief, educational and economic background, world view, cultural background, lifestyle, customs and traditions and value judgment. (c) *Diversity of individual features*: It might be considered as personality, physical and mental skills, knowledge and skills, behavioral style, psychological, mental and emotional state, personal conceptualization and affective adaptation.

Diversity between human beings is natural and common. Every individual has different demographic, individual and socio-cultural features and values. Such diversity may have implications for organizations in different ways and brings individual and organizational benefits and drawbacks. Today, organizations have to create a compatible working environment for those who have many different features in different aspects (McMahan, Bell, & Virick, 1998, p. 198; Loosemore & Al Musmani 1999; Brown, Hunter, & Donahoo, 2012) and therefore the notion of diversity management in which there is respect for individual, social and cultural diversity of the staff and the consideration of organizational goal attainment, by seeing diversity as a source of richness has gradually become important (Muter, 1999). In this context, as of the 1990s, human resources researchers have started a new conceptualization: "diversity management". Diversity management includes recognition and approval of any employee diversity, respect for diversity, openness and appraisal (Watson, Kumar, & Michaelson, 1993). The main aim here is to create a positive working environment for all employees (Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Von Bergen, Soper, & Foster, 2000 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2011b).

Anatolian territories, where Turkey is located, have welcomed many civilizations to the present day (Güneş, 2005). There is a wide variety of cultural identity in Turkey in terms of ethnicity, religion and religious sects. The 1960 concensus showed diversity in Turkey caused by language (8%) and religion (1%) (Turkish Statistical Institute [TÜİK], 1960), whereas the 2006 population research revealed denominational differences (20%) (Konda, 2006) and the 2008 population research explored ethnic diversity (22%). There have been scientific findings for greater diversity (Ağırdir, 2008). In Turkey, there are many ethnic groups such as Kurds, Arabs, Georgians, Lazs, Circassians and Bosnians in addition to minorities (Armenians, Greeks of Turkish nationality, Jews). Kurds constitute the main group as they more heavily populated. Religious communities such as Muslims, Christians and Jews still exist, as well as Muslim sects like Sunni and Alevi and Christian sects like Catholic, Orthodox and Assyrian. The mosaic structure of the society is the cultural historical heritage of the Ottoman Empire, which supported cultural existence of citizens under their reign in return for the recognition of the sovereignty of the Empire (Eryılmaz, 1990). The heterogeneous social structure underlies school staff profile as in all fields. Some consider such socio-cultural and ethnic diversity as a threat to the future of the society and still some others think this is a source of richness and dynamism for social improvement (Ağırdir, 2008). There has been a heated debate particularly caused by Kurdish group related issues and conflicts in the eastern part of the country. No one could exactly predict whether such an atmosphere will have the risk of being reflected onto the current relationships between school staff from different ethnicity. In this respect, it is critical to have a diversity based management mentality in schools as educational organizations which takes diversity into account.

Historically considered, Turkey has an important, administrative heritage which can maintain and manage diversity. It will be easier to establish and sustain social peace as long as diversity is considered as a source of richness, not as a discriminative factor in an environment of tolerance to be created with the contributions of such heritage (Memduhoğlu, 2008). The reason is organizations in which staff diversity is overwhelming could turn their diverse structure into an advantage. Tayeb (1992) suggests organizations which include staff from various cultural backgrounds could be managed in three ways (as cited in Yeşil, 2009): *The first alternative* is to accept all employees as members of a homogenous culture regardless of diversity. This approach decreases especially job satisfaction in employees despite being practical. *The second alternative* is to define organizational policies featuring staff diversity. This approach will inevitably entail discriminations although it increases job satisfaction in the short term. *The third alternative* is to recognize staff diversity and try to create a certain kind of synergy gathering diversity around shared organizational goals. In this approach, diversity is neither disregarded and suppressed, nor highlighted; thus, there is no discrimination between different groups caused by coarse restrictions.

Schools, where the social values are produced and transferred are the mirrors of the society (Morrison, Lumby, & Sood, 2006). Teachers and students at schools reflect the diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, socio-cultural values, socio-economic status and talents (Apple & Beane, 1995 as cited in Güleş, 2012). From this aspect, schools are coalition that host various diversities such as values, beliefs, opinions and experiences (Walker & Quong, 1998; Şişman, 2006; Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007).

The advantages and problems that arise in workplace as a result of diversity are also valid for the schools. According to this view, while teachers with different characteristics, talents, cultural values and experiences provide many advantages for the school they work, there could also be some disagreement, alignment and conflicts (Memduhoğlu, 2011a, 2011b). This situation sometimes eases the administrative decisions and actions of the principals but sometimes worsens this process.

Despite being beneficial, organizational diversity may lead to certain drawbacks, especially when it is not well managed. It is important to be aware of organizational staff diversity as well as benefits and drawbacks caused by diversity. Answers to the following questions must be sought: "How is workforce diversity perceived in schools?", "What do teachers think about potential advantages and disadvantages caused by diversity?", and "What administrative policies for diversity are followed?". It might be said that this topic has not been investigated in Turkey in a detailed way, particularly in educational organizations although there have been many related studies conducted abroad (Gentile, 1994; McMahan et al., 1998; Schermerhon, Hunt, & Osborn, 2000; Speechley & Wheatley, 2001; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2001; Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Daus, 2002; Richard, McMillian, Chandwick, & Dwyer, 2003; Mollica, 2003; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008; Avery & McKay, 2010; Brodbeck, Guillaume, & Lee, 2011; Brannan & Priola, 2012; Guillaume et al., 2014; Mor Barak, 2014). In this context, the research mainly focuses on how diversity in Turkish high schools are perceived by school administrators and teachers and to what extent it is taken into account in administrative applications and policies.

Answers to the following questions were sought in the research:

1. How do high school administrators and teachers perceive diversity?
2. How do high school administrators and teachers perceive potential advantages and drawbacks of diversity?
3. How do high school administrators and teachers perceive administrative applications and policies for diversity?

Method

Research design: Survey method was employed in the research as well as qualitative method. The reason survey method was chosen for the research was because the views of the school administrators and the teachers about diversity management in high schools were holistically examined, because survey methods are used to describe the previous or the current case of a given issue (Karasar, 1986, p. 80).

Research group: The research group consisted of total 24 state high school administrators and teachers in Kütahya, Kırıkkale and Van provinces. Eight chosen participants from each province (four school administrators and four teachers) were interviewed. For such studies, the principals sometimes could hold a concern to give a positive message for their schools. Especially they are expected to give positive opinion about the administrative applications and policies that they follow for diversity management. Therefore, the teachers' views about the topic can have a balanced role for getting a realistic result. For this reason, teachers and principals were decided to take part in research participants. The provinces were chosen according to two main criteria: socio-economic development index and geographical region. According to data obtained from The Organizational State Planning, each province was in a different development group (Dinçer & Özaslan, 2004). One of the provinces is located in the west of Turkey, one in central Turkey and the other is in the east. Therefore, representation was achieved by choosing different provinces in terms of geographical location and socio-economic development level. Teachers and principals were selected in terms of easy accessibility principle. Because some administrators did not accept to interview, participants were selected from two high schools whose administrators accepting to take part in the research. In each high school a principal, a vice-principal and two teachers were interviewed. Personal data from the school administrators and the teachers included in the interview is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal Data from the Administrators and the Teachers in the Interview

Variable	Level	Administrator	Teacher	Total
Place of Occupation	Kütahya	4	4	8
	Kırıkkale	4	4	8
	Van	4	4	8
Gender	Kadın	3	5	8
	Erkek	9	7	16
Professional Seniority	1-5 yıl	-	4	4
	6-10	5	6	12
	11 yıl ve üzeri	7	2	8
Educational Background	Lisans	8	10	18
	Lisansüstü	4	2	6
Branch	Sosyal Bil.	8	7	15
	Mat.-Fen Bil.	3	4	7
	Diğer	1	1	2
Total		12	12	24

As it is clear from Table 1, total 24 participants were interviewed for the research. Eight participants were from high schools in Kütahya, eight from high schools in Kırıkkale and eight from high schools in Van. Half of the participants consisted of school administrators and the rest were composed of teachers; eight (one third) participants were female and 16 (two thirds) were male. Half of the administrators were principals and the second half were consisted of vice-principals. Two of the woman principals worked in Kütahya and one of them in Kırıkkale. The ratio of female school administrators was low. This shows the general situation in Turkey. The majority of the participants had an occupational experience six years and above. Only four participants had an occupational experience of 1-5 years. As a result, it could be said that the interviewees were relatively experienced. This was mainly due to the fact that more than half of the school administrators were in their seniority

positions of 11 years and above. This result shows that experience is an important factor in school administration in Turkey, as in the other fields. Six of the interviewees had post graduate degrees, and four were administrators. Most of the interviewees (15) came from social sciences, seven of them from maths and science education. Two participants were from fine arts and guidance.

Data gathering Instrument: Research data was collected by the interview method. This method is used to explore cases which are not easy to measure and observe such as their thoughts, intentions, comments and mental perceptions (Frankel & Devers, 2000; Witt; 1986). Multidimensional, detailed data by the interview method about workforce diversity perceptions and diversity management in high schools were collected.

In the study, semi-structured interview method, one of the three interview methods (formal, semi-formal and informal) was used (Cook, Selltitz, Jahoda, & Deutsch, 1960; Kaptan, 1991; Ekiz, 2009). With the use of the semi- structured interview method, where research questions are outlined and the roots of the issue is explored by providing interviewees with semi-flexibility, it was aimed that the interview was independent from rigidity, overflexibility and subjectivity observed in the two other methods (Cook et al., 1960). In the semi- structured interview method, participants are asked questions such as “*In your opinion, what is the reason for that?*”, “*Why do you say so?*”, and “*What else can you say?*” Therefore, the general case is defined and certain points are attempted to be thoroughly examined. A semi-structured question form to include each factor (scale) was developed for the interview, based on the literature. Eight experts on educational sciences, research methods and statistics were asked to test the eligibility, understandability and applicability of the interview. The form was finalized as recommended by the experts and due applications were conducted. Three questions were asked to the participants during the interview and the interviews lasted about 10-15 minutes. The interviews were video recorded with the permission of the participant high school administrators and the teachers.

Data analysis: *Content analysis*, a qualitative analysis method, was used for data analysis. It might be said that content analysis is the most rapidly developing qualitative method (Kepenekci & Aslan, 2011). Content analysis, which could be described as a systematic analysis of written and verbal materials, is quantification or digitization of what people say through encoding. In the core of the approach lies determination and categorization of the frequency of what is told (Balci, 2009; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Content analysis searches social reality through inferences about overt and covert content. The former consists of apparent statements, whereas the latter means underlying meanings of these statements (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001; Neuendorf, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005; Neuman, 2007). Berelson (1952) sees the technique ideal for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the interview content (Cook et al., 1960 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2012).

In content analysis, first, main categories like theme and analysis unit and sub-categories are specified and defined as analysis units. And then, context units in which analyses a conduct (word, sentence, paragraph, view or the whole text) are decided (Balci, 2009; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In the research, category statement/sentence was chosen as the context unit. Such a statement could consist of a sentence or a few sentences. Here, the criterion is that a statement should reflect a single view and have a clear, identical meaning (Carley, 1992 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2012).

There are qualitative and quantitative applications of content analysis. In qualitative content analysis, sub-categories or context unit is taken as positive, negative or unbiased according to qualities. Since the numbers of repetition (frequency) of the statements articulated by the participants and the qualities of the statements were also evaluated in the research, qualitative and quantitative content analyses were performed together. Both the overt and the covert contents were taken into account during counting, and the statements were encoded as positive, negative or unbiased according to their qualities. There were three main categories in the study: “workforce diversity perceptions”, “potential benefits and drawbacks of diversity” and “diversity management”. The defined categories are listed below.

1. Employee diversity perceptions in schools
2. Views about potential benefits and drawbacks of diversity
3. Views about administrative applications and policies for diversity

The recorded interview data were deciphered and then the statements (view, sentence) were encoded as they were. The sub-categories and irrelevant responses were eliminated and relevant data was categorized. Frequency of the participant views was defined and also descriptive analysis technique (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005) was used to present the views strikingly with the precise quotation in the findings and the comments in the framework of the three steps phase (data reduction, data presentation, inference, and confirmation) (Türnüklü, 2000). Frequency, striking citations (different views), explanatoriness (theme conformity), variety and extreme examples were the criteria for data presentation (Carley, 1992 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2012; Ünver, Bümen, & Başbay, 2010). Then, the descriptions together with data were interpreted by the inductive method. Participants' responses were represented by encoding participants. Accordingly teachers and administrators were encoded with letters and numbers as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Codes for Teachers and Administrators

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12
Kütahya	x	x	x	x									x	x	x	x								
Kırıkkale					x	x	x	x									x	x	x	x				
Van									x	x	x	x									x	x	x	x
Female			x	x			x						x				x	x			x	x		
Male	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				x	x		x	x
Principal	x	x			x	x			x	x														
Vice-Princ.			x	x			x	x			x	x												

As seen in Table 2 school administrators were encoded as A1, A2...A12, and teachers were encoded as T1, T2...T12. However, while representing some common responses shared by majority, codes were not represented. Because, representing the codes of the many participants who were the owner of most shared responses might harm the fluency and appearance of the paper. For this reason for just the direct quotations and responses shared by a few participants.

Research validity and reliability: Various preventive measures were taken to ensure and increase the research validity and reliability. Expert views were taken for internal validity (plausibility) and external validity, two high school teachers were pre-interviewed and detailed descriptions and external interpretations were associated with the literature. Consistency for internal validity was examined and an expert was asked to confirm external validity. The expert encoded the interview data deciphered as plain texts under the specified categories according to quality and calculated frequency. The following qualitative research reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2012) was used to evaluate the research reliability.

$$R (\text{Reliability}) = \frac{\text{Na (Agreement)}}{\text{Na (Agreement)} + \text{Nd (Disagreement)}}$$

The views of the participant groups were calculated in each category and then the means were taken as the category mean. An agreement of 70% between expert examinations is essential for research external reliability. Accordingly, reliability of the first category was found 76%, reliability of the second category was found 82%, and the reliability in the third category was found 86% and the mean reliability of the research was found 81%. Reliability above 70% shows that the interview data evaluation related with interview data was reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

The research findings are presented under three categories according to the research themes.

Perceptions of the Administrators and the Teachers About Workforce Diversity in High Schools

The findings of the interviews with the administrators and the teachers about workforce diversity in high schools are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceptions of the Administrators and the Teachers about Workforce Diversity in High Schools

Views	Admin	Teacher	f	Tot. f	%	
Positive (+)	Similarity (lack of diversity) causes monotony	10	13	23		
	Diversity is natural and it is an advantage for schools	11	11	22		
	Diversity is a source of richness	10	11	21		
	I support diversity	6	7	13		
	I respond positively to diversity as an advantage for school	2	1	3		
	The greatest difficulty is having to live with those similar to us	-	1	1	112	% 78
	No developmental dynamics in social structure can be observed when everybody is similar	1	2	3		
	Similarities adversely affect school development and teacher development	5	6	11		
	I prefer to work in a school where there is overwhelming diversity	6	9	15		
	Negative (-)	Diversity threatens schools as it causes school groupings and disintegration	1	1	2	
Individual diversity cannot be a source of richness for schools		1	1	2		
Teachers should keep diversity private, and they shouldn't reflect it to teaching profession		1	-	1		
Diversity is becoming a threat to institutions because of special conditions in our country		2	1	3		
I wouldn't like to work in a school where there is overwhelming diversity		4	4	8	24	% 17
Similarities are more compatible and reasonable in terms of administrative action		2	-	2		
Administrators do not welcome diversity		1	3	4		
Regulations are particularly binding for administrators when it comes to diversity		1	-	1		
I wouldn't like to work in a school where the number of different ethnic groups and religious beliefs is high		-	1	1		
Unbiased		Diversity should neither be praised nor suppressed	2	2	4	
	Diversity is sometimes desirable sometimes undesirable, depending on cases and conditions	1	2	3	7	% 5

As it is clear from Table 3, the administrators and the teachers generally had a positive perception workforce diversity. When the frequency values are considered, it is seen that 78% of the views about workforce diversity in high schools were positive, 17% were negative and 5% were unbiased. Most of the administrators and the teachers thought that workforce diversity in high schools was a natural, positive source of richness and stated that they supported diversity in their schools. Most of the administrators and the teachers said similarity created monotony/uniformity in schools and adversely affected both personal and organizational development.

Some of the administrators and the teachers who considered diversity in schools as a negative factor thought diversity was occasionally a threat to schools. Those who were concerned also highlighted the risk of school grouping and disintegration caused by diversity (A9, T8). Two administrators and one teacher explained their diversity threat concern in terms of conditions peculiar to Turkey (A3, A5, T8). As a result, an administrator said: *“teachers should keep diversity private, and shouldn't reflect it to teaching profession (A5)”*.

According to Table 3, half of the administrators and one third of the teachers preferred to work in schools where there was overwhelming diversity. According to this finding, nearly all the administrators and the teachers considered diversity as a natural, positive source of richness, whereas the number of those who preferred to work in schools where there was overwhelming diversity decreased. On the other hand, four administrators (A3, A5, A7, A9) and three teachers (T3, T8, T12) stated that they did not want to work in schools where there was overwhelming diversity. Only one administrator and one teacher said they did not want to work in schools where there were different ethnic groups and religious beliefs (A3, T8). Each of the striking positive, negative and neutral answer of the participant's views considering the diversity of the school employees is given below:

“Everybody has been created differently. Even the views, feelings, thoughts and tastes of twins are quite different from one another. As such, considering the employees working in an institution as uniform and disregarding the individual differences is not in tandem with the purpose behind the laws of nature. The schools should not be artificial places or detached from the real life, in fact they should be integrate with every aspect of life and human situation. If there is diversity in real life, then there should also be diversity at schools and the principals should be aware of the fact that the diversity does not occur in vain (T11)”.

“The diversity may have different meanings for different societies; however, because of the peculiar conditions of our country, which is now experiencing in an uneasy nowadays, the diversity may increase conflicts at schools. Therefore, I would not want to be the principal of the schools with various diversities. Who wants such an environment? (A6)”.

“Schools are public places. Those working in these places act in accordance with the same standardized rules. Therefore, there would not be any situation or environment that reflects the diversity of the employees. There would not be any differences whether the teacher would be a female or a male. The teachers can be efficient not with their diversities but with their competencies (A2)”.

Potential Benefits and Drawbacks of Workforce Diversity in High Schools

The findings of the interviews with the administrators and the teachers about potential benefits and drawbacks of workforce diversity in high schools are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Views About Potential Benefits and Drawbacks of Workforce Diversity in High Schools

Views	Admin	Teacher	f	Tot. f	%	
Potential Benefits	Diversity brings development and dynamism	11	12	23	102	% 76
	Diversity enriches schools	8	10	18		
	Diversity brings broader viewpoints and enriched thinking and discourse	9	7	16		
	Diversity enables alternative solution suggestions	5	6	11		
	Everybody contributes to schools and others through diversity	4	6	10		
	Individuals enrich relationships in schools through different cultures and personal features	3	2	5		
	Diversity creates union of forces and synergy	2	1	3		
	Respect for diversity and a culture of finding the minimum common point to come together is developed.	1	1	2		
	Employee skills for sympathy are increased	2	2	4		
	Diversity in age, gender and so on creates an environment of respect and politeness	-	1	1		
	Diversity in belief, ethnicity, philosophical thinking and so on creates a culture of tolerance	-	1	1		
	Diversity enables people to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses	-	1	1		
	Diversity facilitates elimination of prejudices	2	1	3		
	Diversity increases performance	-	1	1		
	Employees with different skills bring different school achievements	1	2	3		
	Potential Drawbacks	It is difficult to manage schools with high diversity	1	4		
There is disagreement and conflicts in schools because of diversity		3	4	7		
Diversity causes school groupings		5	3	8		
Diversity brings mutual trust issues		2	1	3		
Diversity causes restricted communication and interaction		-	1	1		
Different expectations bring problems in groups		1	2	3		
Diversity decreases cooperation and solidarity		1	1	2		
Diversity in opinions causes tasks to take longer		1	1	2		
It is difficult to gather individuals around certain goals as diversity increases		1	1	2		
Diversity carries risks for "student modeling"		1	-	1		
Diversity brings an invisible, but perceivable polarization		1	-	1		

As it is clear from Table 4, the high school administrators and teachers gave different views about potential benefits and drawbacks of workforce diversity in high schools. More than three fourths of the views were related to personal and organizational benefits brought by diversity. The followings respectively were the most frequently stated views about potential benefits of workforce diversity in schools: "Diversity brings development and dynamism", "Diversity enriches schools, diversity brings broader viewpoints and enriched thinking and discourse", "Diversity enables alternative solution suggestions", "Everybody contributes to schools and others through diversity."

Most of the school administrators and the teachers agreed with these views. They also stated the following benefits: “Employee skills for sympathy are increased (A4, A10, T4, T9)”, “Diversity facilitates elimination of prejudices (A4, A6, T9)”, “Diversity creates a culture of respect, politeness and tolerance (T4)”, “Diversity increases performance and synergy (T11)”, “Diversity enables people to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (T9)”.

The followings were the most frequently stated views by the school administrators and the teachers about potential drawbacks of workforce diversity in schools: “It is difficult to manage schools with high diversity (A3, T3, T4, T8, T12)”, “Diversity causes disagreements and creates conflicts (A3, A5, A7, T2, T6, T8, T12)”, and “Diversity causes school groupings. A principal asserted that diversity leads to forming groups and then stated: “Diversity causes invisible but perceived polarisation (A7)”. The participants said diversity in schools also caused mutual trust problems (A7, A10, T3), communication problems (T8) and time consuming tasks (A5, T1). The two examples that reflect the positive and negative views of the participants about the advantages and disadvantages, resulting from the diversity among the high school employees are given below:

“I could not even think of an environment in which all the administrators and teachers are only males or females and had the same views. Such a school environment would of course be quite boring both for everyone. I would not want to work at such a school. Diversity creates excitement and gives vitality for school (T1).”

“At a school where everybody has different opinions and where one calls something as white while the others call it as black, there will always be disputes and conflicts. Which one of the teachers will the principal satisfy or whom will the students choose as a model? If the diversity could bring profit for the school, it would also cost more loss (T7)”.

Administrative Applications and Policies for Workforce Diversity in High Schools

The findings of the interviews with the school administrators and the teachers about administrative applications and policies for workforce diversity in high schools are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Views About Administrative Practices and Policies for Workforce Diversity in High Schools

Views		Admin	Teacher	f	Tot. f	%
Positive (+)	Diversity is considered natural and positive in our school	8	4	12		
	Diversity should be supported	10	4	14		
	Teachers are treated according to their personal features	8	3	11		
	Diversity is taken into account in task delegation and work sharing	6	2	8	49	% 60
	Teacher diversity is exploited.	-	1	1		
	Work teams generally consist of individuals with different skills and features	1	3	4		
Nefative (-)	Employees are not provided with a chance to express diversity	1	4	5		
	Diversity is disregarded and ignored	1	3	4		
	School administrators do not start groups of people with different views so as not to experience problems	2	5	7		
	School administrators display a self-centered traditional approach to diversity	-	1	1	32	% 40
	School administrators say they care about diversity but do not show that in practice	-	1	1		
	School administrators think that diversity causes administrative difficulty and try to suppress diversity	-	1	1		

Table 5. Continue

Views		Admin	Teacher	f	Tot. f	%
Nefative (-)	Sometimes, there is regional and ethnic discrimination	-	2	2		
	Regulations make educational workers similar, and restrict diversity	1	-	1		
	New comers feel obliged to adapt themselves to the shared culture and similarities in schools	2	2	4	32	% 40
	School administrators are closer to those who think and act as administrators do	1	3	4		
	Schools are administrated according to regulations, not diversity	2	-	2		

As it is clear from Table 6, the school administrators and the teachers stated that there were positive and negative administrative applications and policies for workforce diversity in high schools. The following positive administrative applications and policies for workforce diversity in high schools come to the fore most: *“Diversity is natural, positive and supported”*, *“Teachers are treated according to their personal features”*, and *“Work teams generally consist of individuals with different skills and features”*. Most of the administrators agreed on these positive views, and a small number of the teachers shared the same views. According to the table, the school administrators and the teachers thought there were negative administrative applications and policies for workforce diversity in high schools, as well. The following negative administrative applications and policies for workforce diversity in high schools come to the fore most: *“Employees are not provided with a chance to express diversity (A8, T1, T5, T6, T11)”*, *“Work teams generally consist of individuals with different skills and features”*, *“School administrators think that diversity causes administrative difficulty and try to suppress diversity (T7)”*, and *“School administrators are closer to those who think and act as administrators do (A8, T1, T6, T11)”*. Most of those who talked about these negative administrative approaches were the participant teachers.

Furthermore, some of the school administrators and the teachers shared the following ideas: *“Regulations make educational workers similar, “Schools are administrated according to regulations”, and “Diversity cannot be taken into account in administrative decision making and actions according to regulations”*. The positive and negative examples reflecting the views of the participants concerning the administrative applications and policies of the diversity management at high schools are given below:

“The diversity that our school’s employees and teachers are characterized by is taken into consideration. For example, when there is a division of the work, the works that are related to physical power are given to male teachers rather than female teachers. This is natural and should be this way. To give an example, according to type of the problem that the student encounters, he/she is supported for building up dialogue with the teacher who is the fan of the same football team or sometimes is from the same region or plays the same musical instrument (T9)”,

“The principal of the school where I work points out that he values the diversity but in fact he does not. Indeed, people use figurative language when they are talking about such kind of issues; however, they never act as they talk. We have a problem of sincerity. Sometimes the people from the conflicting places or coming from different ethnicity are subjected to discrimination (T4)”.

Discussion and Conclusion

The views of the school administrators and the teachers about workforce diversity in high schools were generally positive. The participants largely considered workforce diversity in high schools as a natural, positive source of richness. Positive attitude towards diversity is based on two dimensions in general. First, diversity is viewed natural in human aspect and also essential for personal and organizational development. Various studies have shown that workforce diversity in organizations brings rapid personal and organizational learning and development (Gentile, 1994; Schermerhon et al., 2000; Speechley & Wheatley, 2001; Ashkanasy et al., 2002; Richard et al., 2003; Guillaume et al., 2014; Mor Barak, 2014). In fact, in homogenous social sections where everybody is assimilated in inflexible community patterns and others are isolated, it is not reasonable to expect developmental dynamics in fields such as science arts, economics and communication.

Some of the school administrators and the teachers, though low in number, considered diversity as a threat to schools. According to those who supported this view, *“Teachers should keep diversity private and shouldn't reflect it to teaching profession”*. Some of them based their views on conditions peculiar to Turkey. It could be said that this view, also expressed in different socio-political and cultural fields, carries a risk of covering a different guise for the world standards. Considering theories and applications accepted as natural and positive in other countries as drawbacks in Turkey might turn into a paranoid obstacle in minds.

According to the research finding, nearly all of the school administrators and the teachers considered diversity as a natural, positive source of richness, and the number of those who preferred to work in schools where there was overwhelming diversity decreased. This result shows that workforce diversity in schools is right and supported in theory, but it is not preferable in practice because of potential problems.

In the research, it was concluded that the school administrators and the teachers largely shared the view that diversity brought personal and organizational benefits. The participant views about potential benefits of diversity focused on the following: *“Diversity increases potential alternative solutions”*, *“Diversity brings personal and organizational development”*, *“Diversity creates synergy”*, and *“Diversity contributes to the development of a culture of tolerance”*. This finding was parallel to other research results (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; McKay et al., 2008; Avery & McKay, 2010; Brodbeck et al., 2011; Brannan & Priola, 2012; European Commission, 2013; Guillaume et al., 2014).

Research on potential benefits of workforce diversity in organizations has a significant place in the literature. Some of these studies are as follows: Attracting the most skilled workers to organizations and keeping them in organizations (Laçınler, 1997; McMahan et al., 1998, p. 198; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2001; Brannan & Priola, 2012; Mor Barak, 2014); increasing competitive power of an organization (Redding, 1982; Thomas & Ely, 1999; Brodbeck et al., 2011); rapid personal and organizational learning, high creativity and innovation (Gentile, 1994; Speechley & Wheatley, 2001; Richard et al., 2003; Schermerhon et al., 2000; Sarayönlü, 2003; Avery & McKay, 2010); high spirits and increasing job satisfaction (Gilbert & Stead, 1999; Von Bergen et al., 2000; Maldonado, Dreachslin, Dansky, Souza, & Gatto, 2002; Guillaume et al., 2014); suggesting alternative solutions to problems and organizational flexibility (Nemeth, 1986; Cox 1992; Walton, 1994; Richard, 2000; Brown et al., 2012); quick reaction to environmental change and gaining higher adaptation skills (Cox & Blake, 1991; Romano, 1995; Collins, 1996; McMahan et al., 1998; Clarge, Cao, & Lahenay, 2003); developing good public relations and positive organizational image (Speechley & Wheatley, 2001); synergy and organizational effectiveness (Adler, 1991; Muter, 1999; Thomas & Ely, 1999; Schermerhon et al., 2000; Mollica, 2003; Avery & McKay, 2010).

Different workers bring different cultures, personal features and skills to the school environment. Diversity is expected to enrich workers and schools, ensure dynamism and development, create different, broader viewpoints, contribute others and schools by each member's features, bring broader thinking and alternative solution suggestions and enable others to view like others (sympathy), contribute to elimination of prejudices and enrich relationships (Brown et al., 2012). For example, diversity in gender, belief and philosophical thinking might contribute to the development and strength of an environment of love, respect and politeness and tolerance culture or it might be beneficial to have staff with different skills and features due to various tasks to be handled in schools because personal cases may teach others new things, make others aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and thus learn and develop through modeling (McKay et al., 2008 as cited in Memduhoğlu, 2011b).

The participant views about potential drawbacks of workforce diversity in schools focused on the following: *"Diversity causes disagreement, school groupings and conflicts", and thus "It is difficult to manage schools with high diversity"*. Other researchers have shown disadvantages of increasing organizational diversity. Some of the disadvantages which appear when organizational diversity is not well managed are as follows: frustration and stress (Loosemore & Lee, 2000 as cited in Balay & Sağlam, 2004; European Commission, 2013); lower organizational commitment (Cox, 1992; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992); disagreement and organizational communication breakdown caused by misunderstandings (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Fiedler, 1966 as cited in Laçinler, 1997; Mor Barak, 2014); increased worker groupings and conflicts (Martins, Miliken, Wiesenfeld, & Salgado, 2003; Pelled et al., 1999 as cited in Richard et al., 2003); discrimination and favoritism (Ball & Culloch, 1990; Sarayönlü, 2003; Brannan & Priola, 2012).

It cannot be denied that diversity in schools carries risks and causes some potential drawbacks especially disagreement, grouping and conflict risks are always born in schools. It could be said that similarities facilitate administrators' actions in practice such as decision making although they do not help personal and organizational benefits. However, those who are employed in homogenous environments where similarities are overwhelming will inevitably suffer from difficulty in adaptation to out-of-school social life and diversity (Memduhoğlu, 2011b; Lau Chin & Trimble, 2014).

In the research, it was concluded that there were both positive and negative administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools. Accordingly, diversity was found natural and it was supported, teachers were treated according to their personal features and work groups in general consisted of those with different features and competencies. Most of the school administrators and a small number of the teachers shared those views.

It is an inevitable fact that diversity perceptions, the views and preferences about potential benefits and drawbacks of workforce diversity in high schools will influence administrative decision making and applications. In the research, the school administrators and the teachers agreed that there were positive and negative administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools, as well. The administrators thought administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools were positive. They also thought that diversity was taken into account in giving tasks and work sharing, it was not disregarded, but welcomed and supported, diversity was utilized, teachers were treated according to their personal features and conditions and they were provided with chances to express diversity. However, the teachers did not give the same views. According to the teachers, high school workers were not provided with opportunities to express diversity, school administrators thought diversity caused school administration problems and suppressed diversity, and work teams in general consisted of those with similar features. Although it seemed that diversity was considered natural by the school administrators, there was sometimes an overt, sometimes a covert effort to eliminate diversity in deeper layers of the discourse.

According to the research findings, 76 % of the participant views were centered on the fact that diversity was beneficial, and brought schools and school workers advantages. On the other hand, the percentage of the views that supported positive administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools was 60%. It showed that administrative applications and policies for diversity in high schools were not positive at the same rate although diversity was considered theoretically useful and beneficial.

According to the study, some of the school administrators stated that they were unwilling to work in schools where there was overwhelming diversity. This was mainly due to the fact that it was difficult to manage schools with high diversity. Similarly, in a study with school administrators, some of the administrators who were interviewed asserted that it was more difficult to manage a group/team of people with different cultural and demographic backgrounds and therefore teams should include those with similar features (Sarayönlü, 2003, p. 58). In fact, diversity may increase misunderstandings within groups, lead to disagreement and people might get irritated by group members. As a result, decision making mechanism takes longer and the procedure gets harder. Thus, it is more difficult to manage culturally heterogeneous groups than homogenous groups (Fiedler, 1966 as cited in Laçınler, 1997; Powell, 2011).

In the research, some of the school administrators and the teachers shared the views that regulations made workers similar, schools were administrated according to regulations, not diversity, and diversity couldn't be taken into account in administrative decisions and actions according to regulations. This approach reflects a classical administration understanding which makes regulations a taboo. However, regulations are based on reasoning, as well and the main aim here is to provide societies, organizations, employees and other shareholders with benefits. It could be said that using regulations as an excuse in administrative applications and actions contrary to personal and organizational development and benefits with the aim of similarization is contradictory with today's human-centered administration approach.

Common social diversity brings the following dilemma into question: how to suppress others who are cognitively and intellectually dispensed with the society or to live together in respect to others (Parekh, 2002). Medina (2003) suggests that considering diversity as an issue means turning a blind eye to similarities which converge us to others. In fact, uniformity or similarization is a common, strong tendency. One reason is that similarization gives leaders an unrealistic feeling of trust. When individuals think, act, talk and dress like leaders or show them as examples, leaders think that they approve leaders, but in fact workers say what leaders would like to hear. Hence, leaders get an artificially compatible and harmonious organization but cannot ensure creativity, synergy, unity or security (Memduhoğlu, 2007). Today, it is increasingly known in many sectors that similarization does not mean togetherness; nor does uniformity mean collaboration (Martins et al., 2003).

Pucik, Hanada, Filfield and Patterson (1989) and Earley (1993) conclude that those from collectivist cultures are satisfied with group work instead of individual work or out-of-group work and solitary work increases performance in individualistic cultures (as cited in Pavett & Morris, 1995). In this context, it can be inferred that job satisfaction will increase because of collective work in groups with different properties, instead of solitary work or working with similar ones in Turkish society, where group work and solidarity are more common than individual work.

Anatolia has historically been the cradle of different civilizations and societies and thus molded by diversity. Under the influence of globalization, the heritage has created a social composition which includes demographic and socio-cultural diversity in Turkey. Such diversity, as mentioned before, sometimes causes problems, and sometimes constitutes a source of richness. In educational organizations, as in the other fields, whether workforce diversity causes problems or becomes a source of richness largely depends on diversity perceptions and approaches to diversity (Memduhoğlu, 2011a).

People from different cultural and family backgrounds would like to have the freedom and enjoy the right to be themselves. Diversity means everybody's own point of view, principles, strengths and weaknesses, and interpersonal relationships. These unique features are peculiar to people and identified with them. Workers continue to be different in work places without having to give up their peculiarities by respecting others' features at the same time. In this sense, diversity in organizations appears as a phenomenon both advantageous and disadvantageous.

In schools, whether workforce diversity causes problems or becomes a source of richness largely depends on diversity perceptions and approaches to diversity. The purpose of education is not solely to eliminate the differences between individuals and not only train such people within a monolithic concept of training, but rather to ensure the integrity and harmony through such diversity (Yılman, 2006, as cited in Güleş, 2012). The way to achieve this goal would be through a management approach that takes into account the differences (Lauring ve Selmer, 2012) in establishing democratic schools (Şişman, Güleş, & Dönmez, 2010). When workforce diversity is recognized in schools, seen as a source of richness and considered in administrative applications and actions, it will be easier to prevent drawbacks caused by diversity and to take advantage of its benefits because diversity will no longer be a source of conflicts.

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