

<https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.2.26>

## EVALUATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PRACTICES OF MANAGERS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

### ОЦІНКА ПРАКТИКИ СТРАТЕГІЧНОГО ПЛАНУВАННЯ КЕРІВНИКІВ ЗАКЛАДІВ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ОСВІТИ

Received: 03/04/2024

Accepted: 14/05/2024

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**How to Cite (APA Style):**

Selkan, O. G., Dağlı, G., Altınay, F., & Altınay, Z. (2024). Evaluation of strategic planning practices of managers in primary education institutions. *Educational Challenges*, 29(2), 388–400 <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.2.26>

**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose.** *Rapid changes that have affected the world from past to present have caused educational institutions to change in order to keep up with the times and raise people for the future. It has become important for educational institutions to turn to new approaches in order to keep up with the changes taking place, to overcome the problems they will encounter and to chart their future. What strategic planning, one of these approaches, can do in educational institutions has become more and more important day by day. One of the important factors in the applicability of strategic planning in educational institutions is the closeness of school administration and teachers to this concept.*

*In this study, the strategic planning practices of administrators and teachers in primary education institutions in the Mesarya rural area, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will be **aimed** and evaluated in order to shed light on the knowledge level of administrators and teachers in the country's educational institutions about strategic planning, whether they carry out these plans in their schools, and similar questions.*

**Methodology.** *In this regard, in order to achieve the intended goal, semi-structured interview questions were prepared, and the collected data was finalized based on expert opinions and a pilot application. As a sample, 5 administrators and 5 teachers in the Meserya rural area of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus were selected, and content analysis was conducted based on the data collected through face-to-face interviews.*

**Result.** *As a result of the research, it was underlined that the administrators and teachers mostly did not make strategic planning in the schools where they worked. In light of the results, it is recommended that administrators and teachers who lack*

**Мета.** *Швидкі зміни, які вплинули на світ від минулого до сьогодні, спричинили зміни у навчальних закладах, щоб йти в ногу з часом і виховувати людей майбутнього. Для навчальних закладів стало важливим звернення до нових підходів, щоб не відставати від змін, що відбуваються, долати проблеми, з якими вони зіткнуться, і планувати своє майбутнє. Те, що стратегічне планування, один із пропонуваніх підходів, може зробити в навчальних закладах, з кожним днем стає все більш важливим. Одним із важливих факторів застосовності стратегічного планування в освітніх закладах є близькість адміністрації школи та вчителів до цієї концепції.*

*У цьому дослідженні буде оцінено практику стратегічного планування адміністраторів і вчителів у закладах початкової освіти в сільській місцевості Месарія, Турецької Республіки Північного Кіпру, щоб пролити світло на рівень знань адміністраторів і вчителів у навчальних закладах країни про стратегічне планування, чи виконують вони ці плани у своїх школах.*

**Методологія.** *У зв'язку з цим, для досягнення поставленої мети, були підготовлені напівструктуровані запитання для інтерв'ю, а зібрані дані були доопрацьовані експертними висновками та пілотним додатком. Як вибірку було відібрано 5 адміністраторів і 5 вчителів у сільській місцевості, і було проведено контент-аналіз даних, зібраних методом особистого інтерв'ю.*

**Результат.** *У результаті дослідження було наголошується, що адміністратори та вчителі переважно не здійснювали стратегічного планування у школах, де вони працювали. У світлі результатів рекомендується, щоб адміністратори та*

knowledge on this subject receive in-service training.

**Conclusion.** This study afforded us the opportunity to assess the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of principals and teachers working in primary schools in the rural Mesarya region of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus regarding strategic planning in education.

**Keywords:** strategic planning, management, educational management, planning.

вчителі, яким бракує знань з цього предмету, пройшли навчання без відриву від роботи.

**Висновок.** Це дослідження дало нам можливість оцінити перспективи, знання та досвід директорів і вчителів початкових шкіл у сільській місцевості Месарія Турецької Республіки Північного Кіпру щодо стратегічного планування в освіті.

**Ключові слова:** стратегічне планування, менеджмент, освітній менеджмент, планування.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, one of the important factors in the development of a country and keeping up with the development is education. For this reason, it is important that society has access to this education and that this education includes the right strategic decisions for the needs of the institution (Özdemir, 2023). When the meaning of the word strategy is in the literature, it is a word of Greek origin, formed by the combination of the words "Stratos" and "Ago".

In terms of meaning, "Stratos" means army, while the word "Ago" means to direct (Çiçek et al., 2019). Planning, on the other hand, is about determining the necessary actions to reach the goals set by the organization and deciding how to reach the desired goals (Çekiç & Dilber, 2020). Strategic planning, on the other hand, is a participatory and flexible planning approach that expresses the whole process of monitoring and evaluating success by creating a forward-looking vision based on the situation, mission and principles of the organization, setting goals compatible with this vision and creating measurable indicators (Songür, 2004).

Making strategic planning for the needs of educational institutions will provide more advantages against organisations that do not make a strategic plan and will ensure that the organization is prepared for unexpected situations (Yıldırım, 2023). Strategic Planning seeks answers to the questions of who we are, where we are, where we aim to go and how we can reach our target (Dağlar, 2019; Izgar, 2020; Karakütük, 2020).

Drucker (1994) defines strategic planning as follows: It is a continuous process of making risky decisions with the most comprehensive information for the future in a coordinated manner, arranging the efforts required for the realization of these decisions, and measuring the results of the decisions taken in terms of expectations, through the method of feedback (Aksu, 2002).

The social, political, economic and technological changes that have developed since the second half of the 20th century have also affected educational institutions, which are the human factories where the individuals of the countries are trained. In this period, educational institutions had to change and develop, like every institution that changed and competed.

The basic application of achieving success in the changing and developing world order is planning for the future. The place and importance of these plans in education is increasing day by day. It is important for schools to make their own situation analysis during the period when they differentiate and develop. Bringing the strengths and weaknesses of the schools to the surface, providing ideas about where they want to be in the future and raising the awareness of being cautious against difficulties increase the place and importance of strategic planning (Aslan & Sahin, 2008).

Schools should set forward-looking visions for their future. In this regard, schools should ask themselves questions about their future goals and how and how these goals can be achieved. Schools that determine their vision should make successful plans in order to fulfil this vision. Adhering to these plans is an important element for the effective realization of the vision (Çakır, 2003). Planning is the stage of imagining the future and predicting what will happen in the future (Aydın, 2010).

Strategic planning, on the other hand, defines the target and level that the organization wants to reach (Özbek, 2003). In other words, strategic planning is long-term plans made in order for institutions to achieve their determined goals and missions (Dağlar, 2019). For this reason, it makes it necessary to determine the mission, vision and methods to implement them. Educational institutions that train the country's qualified manpower should try to change the traditional education systems.

In order to overcome these changes, institutions should adopt an effective planning method (Özbek, 2003). Strategic planning can make it easier for schools to accurately predict their future and solve problems according to environmental factors. For this reason, strategic planning is a preferred method recently (Memduhoğlu & Uçar, 2012). Strategic planning involves long-term practices and technical guidance that school units should implement.

Strategic planning holds great importance for educational institutions due to its application not only in school management but in every aspect of the school. Strategic planning is very useful for educational institutions in terms of gathering all the employees of the institutions to a single goal, so educational institutions with strategic planning have a strong foundation to carry out all their activities on the path they have drawn for themselves.(Pitriantini & Permana, 2021).

In this context, this study has tried to determine to what extent the administrators in primary education institutions, which are the first education level of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, can apply strategic planning practices. In this direction, the aim of the research will be to evaluate the strategic planning practices of the administrators and teachers in the primary education institutions working in the rural area of Mesarya.

As a result of this determination, the practices of school administrators and teachers in primary education institutions in strategic planning will be determined and their situations will be revealed.

The **aim** of the research was to evaluate the strategic planning practices of administrators and teachers working in primary education institutions in the Mesarya rural area of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In light of the data obtained for this purpose, the strategic planning practices of teachers and school administrators

working in primary education institutions in the Mesarya rural area of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will be evaluated.

## METHODOLOGY

### – Research Questions

- Do primary education institutions make strategic planning?
- Do primary school administrators and teachers receive in-service training?
- What kind of teamwork do schools do when making their strategic plans?
- What is the contribution of strategic planning to education and training?
- What kind of perspective do schools have towards the future with applied strategic planning?
- Do they have?
- What are the most important points in the applied strategic action plans?
- How do schools evaluate the results of the action plans?

### – Model of the Research

Qualitative research methods were utilized in this study. Qualitative research method is a research method that aims to obtain information about world problems by investigating them.

Compared to the quantitative research method, the qualitative research method helps to create hypotheses rather than collecting numerical data and even helps research by understanding the quantitative research data more comprehensively (Tenny et al., 2020).

The research was carried out with a case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Case studies are generally a preferred method when how or why questions are asked, the researcher has low control over the event, and a modern real-life phenomenon is encountered (Yin, 2003).

The interview technique is a technique used in qualitative research methods, and it aims to collect information during conversations. During the interview, the opinions of the people included in the research are taken and information is tried to be collected about their feelings and thoughts (Dömbekci & Erişen, 2022).

In this research, qualitative research model was applied in order to evaluate the strategic planning practices of administrators in TRNC State Primary Schools.

### – Working group

The sample is a limited part selected from the universe to collect information (Büyüköztürk et al., 2021). There are 86 primary schools affiliated with the Primary Education Department in the TRNC. In order to conduct this research, 5 administrators and 5 teachers from primary schools in rural Mesarya were formed from these primary schools.

The number of administrators taken as the study group is shown in Table 1.

## Table 1

*Number of Working Groups*

| School       | Administrator | Teacher  |
|--------------|---------------|----------|
| A School     | 1             | 1        |
| B School     | 1             | 1        |
| C School     | 1             | 1        |
| D School     | 1             | 1        |
| E School     | 1             | 1        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5</b>      | <b>5</b> |

**Data Collection Process**

The research was collected through face-to-face interviews between the dates of 03 June 2023-15 September 2023, online interviews or by filling out the interview form by giving the participants an appointment. In the research, face-to-face and 30 to 40-minute interviews were conducted with the aim of evaluating the strategic planning practices of the managers. The managers who participated in the meetings were informed that the meeting would be held, and it was arranged in a conversational atmosphere by making an appointment and recording it.

Finally, the interview concluded with a thank-you to the administrators and teachers who participated. Document scanning and interview methods were used to collect data. Data was tried to be obtained using face-to-face interview technique. In terms of the internal validity of the research, interview questions were conducted as a pilot application with 2 administrators and 2 teachers.

The data obtained as a result of these interviews were re-examined and corrections were made, and the data collection process was terminated by making 30-40-minute interviews within the appropriate timeframes of the participants.

– **Analysis of Data**

In order to analyze the content analysis, participants were asked to first fill out the first interview form regarding personal information, and then fill out the second part covering the prepared research questions. The aim here was to reach the desired information and ideas in the light of the questions in the interview form and the data collected. The obtained data were organized and interpreted after in-depth examination. The data were analyzed in four stages. These stages are briefly as follows:

- a) Coding of Data
- b) Finding Themes
- c) Defining the collected data by organizing them according to Codes and Themes
- d) Interpretation of the findings obtained

**a) Coding of Data:**

At this stage, the participants participating in the research were numbered, and the audio recordings taken during the interview were converted into text. By examining the information collected from the participants participating in the research, parts for the

research were created within themselves, and the conceptual ones were named and coded. The code list served as a key list in data collection. Information that is outside the research topic is not added to this coding. Thanks to the code list, it served as a key list in the recovery of the collected data. Information that was out of the scope of the research was not included in this coding.

#### **b) Finding Themes:**

At this stage, the codes determined in the coding of the information were categorized separately and evaluated in separate themes.

#### **c) Organizing and Defining Data According to Codes and Themes:**

At this stage, the data collected from the participants was explained in plain language. The answers given by the participants to the interview questions are placed in quotation marks and italics, and the participant's answer is coded in parentheses.

#### **d) Interpretation of Findings:**

The findings defined by obtaining the data were interpreted and certain conclusions were reached. The collected data were passed through qualitative research stages, comments were made and some results were reached (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

### **RESULTS**

#### **– The Situation of Strategic Planning in Schools**

The question of “Is there strategic planning in your school? Can you explain your thoughts on strategic planning?” has been addressed by the administrators and teachers interviewed. In this direction, 4 out of 5 administrators answered that strategic planning is not done in schools, and 1 administrator replied that strategic planning is done. Among the interviewed teachers, 2 out of 5 stated that strategic planning was not done, and 3 of them stated that it is being done.

#### **– Status of Receiving In-Service Training on Strategic Planning in Schools**

The interviewed administrators and teachers were asked, “Have you received in-service training on strategic planning?” question was posed. In this direction, 3 out of 5 managers gave a negative answer to this question, while 2 managers stated that they received in-service training on this subject. Among the interviewed teachers, 4 out of 5 teachers did not receive in-service training.

#### **– Teamwork Situation During Strategic Planning in Schools**

The interviewed administrators and teachers were asked, “What kind of teamwork is done at school while strategic planning is being done?” question was posed. In this direction, 5 administrators stated that they are working in a democratic team while making strategic planning in their schools. Teachers, on the other hand, talk about democratic teamwork in which everyone puts forward their ideas, except for one teacher who states that the teachers make their plans individually.

#### **– The Contribution of Strategic Planning to Education and Training**

“What do you think about the contribution of the strategic planning you have implemented to education and training in your school?” question was posed. In line with

the answers given, 100% of the administrators and 80% of the teachers have concluded that strategic planning has a positive contribution to education.

– **Where to Take the School in the Future with Strategic Planning**

The interviewed administrators and teachers were asked, "Where do you plan to take your school in the future with the strategic plans you implement? Can you explain?" question was posed. 3 administrators gave negative answers about their future because strategic planning is not done in schools and they are insufficient in terms of budget and time. 2 teachers stated that strategic planning was not done and they had no idea about where to go in the future.

– **The Situation of the Considerations in the Action Plans Tried to Implement in Strategic Planning in Schools**

What do you pay attention to the most in the action plans you try to implement in your strategic planning? Can you explain?" In the question, 2 managers stated that they do not have experience in this matter. The remaining 3 administrators stated that they paid attention to their planning in terms of the financial situation of the school in general schools, the current staff, cooperation, problem solving and knowing possible problems in advance.

– **Evaluation of the Results Received in Strategic Planning in Schools**

From the interviewees, "How do you evaluate the results you have obtained in the action plans you have implemented as a result of the strategic planning you have made?" were asked to answer the question. 2 of the 5 managers who answered the questions stated that they did not have any experience on this subject, while the remaining 3 managers evaluated the action plans they implemented as successful. While 2 teachers who answered the questions evaluated the assessment as successful, the remaining teachers did not answer this question. The same question "What are you doing to make your failed actions successful?" and "With which team, how do you evaluate the results you have obtained in the action plans of your strategic plans? can you explain?" 2 managers who did not have experience in this field stated that they did not have knowledge on this subject.

In response to the question 'Have you received in-service training on strategic planning in schools?', based on the explanations provided for this inquiry, 3 out of 5 administrators (60%) responded negatively, while 2 administrators stated that they had received in-service training on this subject.

Among the teachers interviewed, it was determined that 4 out of 5 teachers (80%) did not receive in-service training. In a study conducted by Şener (2009) to investigate strategic planning in education, it was found that 24% answered 'yes' and 76% answered 'no' to the question about receiving in-service training, within a group of 100 administrators and teachers. This observation regarding the lack of in-service training aligns with the findings of the present study.

The interviewees were asked, 'Do you think that the strategic plans you have implemented have contributed positively to teaching?' Based on the responses, it was concluded that 100% of the administrators and 80% of the teachers believe that strategic plans have a positive impact on education.

In Akdoğan's (2012) study titled 'Strategic Plans Prepared in Primary Schools: Evaluation of the Views of Administrators and Teachers,' teachers in charge of the strategic planning team were invited to participate in activities related to strategic goals. Their views on the contribution of these studies to school development were sought. The results obtained from the research regarding primary school principals and teachers indicate that the vast majority of teachers reported improvements in the physical and social structure of schools, as well as increased student achievement, as a result of activities aligned with the strategic goals.

The sixth sub-problem of the study was determined as 'What is given the most attention in the implemented action plans?' The financial situation of the school and the current staff are among the most critical factors considered when creating action plans. As a result of this, 80% of administrators and 20% of teachers highlighted these aspects. Based on this outcome, it can be inferred that there is insufficient financial support in this regard.

Arslan and Küçüker (2015) reported in their study titled 'Problems Encountered in Strategic Planning' that school principals' planning activities often face challenges, with a notable issue being the lack of a budgetary relationship. According to the research, the strategic plans created did not receive adequate budgetary support, leading to the problem of plans being left unimplemented.

The interviewees were asked, 'How do schools face the future with the implemented strategic plans?'. Specifically, the perspective of the interviewees was sought. According to the responses, 60% of managers and 40% of teachers have no clear idea about their future, indicating a lack of awareness or understanding regarding strategic planning.

In Ayrancı's (2013) study titled 'School Administrators' Strategic Planning and Implementation: Investigation of Opinions on Processes (Kadıköy District Example)', respondents were asked about their agreement with the statement, 'With the Strategic Plan we have prepared, our school will be where it will be in 5 years.' The results showed that 17 (11.4%) strongly disagreed, 52 (34.9%) disagreed, 60 (40.3%) were undecided, and 14 (9.4%) agreed, while none strongly agreed. This variation in responses suggests a significant proportion of respondents are uncertain about the future, indicating contradictions in the research results.

The study highlights that the main reason for this uncertainty is the presence or absence of strategic planning. However, it is noteworthy that 34% of the respondents remained undecided, prompting further consideration regarding the perceived usefulness and lack of strategic planning.

The third sub-problem of the research is 'While schools are making their strategic planning, what kind of teamwork do they employ?'. According to the interview results, 100% of the administrators followed a democratic approach to teamwork. For teachers, this rate was 80%. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that schools predominantly engage in democratic teamwork when formulating their plans.

In Özbek's (2016) study titled 'Teachers' Perception of School Administrators' Democratic Attitudes and Investigation of Opinions on Behaviors According to Various Variables,' opinions were separated, revealing differences and similarities based on teachers'

viewpoints. This research sheds light on schools and teachers, identifying areas of divergence and agreement in their views on democratic governance.

## **DISCUSSION**

While there are numerous studies on sub-topics related to strategic planning (Nebytova, 2022), (Hrona et al., 2022) there is a noticeable gap in research that directly addresses the teamwork aspect of the process. In this study, the first sub-problem addressed whether there is strategic planning in schools. In comparison to international research, the conclusion that there is a lack of strategic planning once again underscores our deficiencies in this regard.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The first sub-problem of the research is, "Is there strategic planning in primary education institutions?" has been determined. The interviewed administrators stated that there was no strategic planning in their schools, with 80% and 60% of teachers stating this issue. The inadequacy of the educational administrators, who have an important position in the field of education due to their authority in the administration and, in parallel with this, in strategic planning is striking here.

Although the teachers seem numerically more promising compared to the administrators in this situation, it is seen that there is a terminological error in the answers given by the teachers to the questions and in the comments. It is concluded that teachers confuse strategic planning with their personal annual plans. In this context, as a result of the first sub-problem of the research, it was concluded that strategic planning in primary education institutions was not carried out to a large extent and it was insufficient as a concept.

The second sub-problem of the research is, "Do the administrators and teachers in primary education receive in-service training?" has been determined. The interviewed managers stated that they received in-service training as 40%. This rate is 20% for teachers. Considering this result, in light of the first sub-problem, it is concluded that the interviewees are inadequate in strategic planning due to the lack of in-service training.

The third sub-problem of the research is, "What kind of teamwork do schools do when they make their strategic plans?" has been determined. 100% of the interviewed managers followed a democratic path while working as a team. For teachers, this is 80%. In light of these results, it has been concluded that schools use democratic teamwork when making strategic plans.

The fourth sub-problem of the research "What is the contribution of strategic planning to education and training?" has been determined. With 80% of the interviewed administrators and 40% of the teachers, strategic planning contributed to the institutions and education. In this context, as a result of the fourth sub-problem of the research, he concluded that strategic planning contributes to institutions and education.

The fifth sub-problem of the research was determined as "What kind of perspective do schools have towards the future with the applied strategic planning". In this direction, the administrators among the interviewees, 60% teachers, 40% concluded that they did not have an idea about their future and that strategic planning was not done.

The sixth sub-problem of the research is, "What is the most important thing in the applied action plans?" has been determined. The financial situation of the school and the current staff action plans are among the most important issues. As a result of this situation, it was stated that 80% were administrators and 20% were teachers. Based on this result, it is concluded that schools are not given sufficient financial support in this regard. The seventh sub-problem of the research, "How do schools evaluate the results obtained in the action plans made?" is specified as.

The conclusion drawn from this is that 40% of the managers stated that they do not have experience in this regard as strategic planning is not done. After the strategic planning is done, the results obtained in the evaluation of the results with the whole school staff are 60% administrators and 60% teachers.

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### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### FUNDING

The authors declare that this study received no specific financial support.

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