Examining the Relationships Between the Level of Schools for Being Professional Learning Communities and Teacher Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the relationships between the levels of schools for being professional learning communities and teacher professionalism based on teachers' perceptions. The participants were a total of 543 teachers working at elementary, middle and high schools in the Eyüp District of Istanbul. The data were gathered through the "Professional Learning Community Scale" and the "Teacher Professionalism Scale". The results showed that the teachers' perceptions on schools becoming professional learning communities and teacher professionalism were above moderate level. There were positive and significant correlations between all dimensions regarding the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, and teacher professionalism. Besides, the only significant and positive predictor of teacher professionalism was found to be the dimension "collective learning and applications" of professional learning community scale.

Keywords: *Teacher Professional Learning Communities, Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Professional Behaviours*

INTRODUCTION

Education is vitally important in every country's social and economic development, citizenship education, and competition with the world. As the borders across the world faint gradually, this competition and need for qualified individuals have reached to the highest level. Therefore, schools are required to re-design themselves to address this need. However, within this new design, teachers' bringing the change and improvement to the school depends on certain organisational and personal characteristics.

Changes in the social structure, increasing expectations from schools, effects of scientific and technological developments on education, emphasis on lifelong learning, and sharing of the educational outcomes by means of international tests have been significant issues for schools' activities of improving their qualities (Fitzpatrick, 1994; Gould, 2005; US Department of Education, [ED],1998). It can be stated that with these issues, the functions and qualities of schools also started to be questioned. In this regard, the enhancement of schools could be possible by improving student learning and the quality of education. Teachers' qualifications are thus a key determinant in achieving these objectives (Hildebrandt & Eom, 2011; Mattar, 2012; Rolff, 2008). In order to yield desired results for schools, teachers should enhance student learning, produce solutions for their different educational needs, and exhibit behaviours in accordance with the requirements of the teaching profession.

In recent years, student learning has bee in the centre of efforts for educational reforms (Hoy &

Miskel, 2010). For this reason, teachers' performing behaviours towards improving student learning is of great importance. These characteristics of teachers are related to their professional behaviours. According to Hargreaves (2000), professional behaviours refer to efforts for increasing the quality of activities and setting high standards in a profession. Professional teacher behaviours enhance the quality of instruction and student achievement (Barrett, 2008; Cohen & Hill, 2000; Guskey, 1986). On the other hand, teachers' professional behaviours reduce the differences among students who have socioeconomic disadvantages (OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], 2016). Furthermore, teachers' professional behaviours are positively related to the practices towards increasing the quality of education (Cohen & Hill, 2000), classroom management (Guskey, 1986), and student learning (Hoque, Alam & Abdullah, 2011; McDonald, Son, Hindman & Morrison, 2005; Poekert, 2012). The increasing drop-out rates, escalation of violent incidents in schools, declines in student achievement and students' lack of thinking skills have led to discussions about teachers' professional behaviours (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Accordingly, it can be argued that teachers' being experts in their profession is an important variable in making schools more effective, improving student learning and yield positive outcomes in the quality of education. Teachers' performing more professional behaviours can thus make the existing structure of schools more effective.

In the Turkish context, there are a number of studies that reveal a relationship between teacher professionalism, and school culture (Kılınç, 2014), burnout (Çelik, 2015), the bureaucratic structure of the school (Cerit, 2012), confidence in the school principal, teacher self-efficacy (Koşar, 2015) and school development. In this respect, one of the aspects that are thought to be related to teachers' professional behaviours is the activities of professional learning communities in schools. Professional behaviours require teachers to do their jobs as experts (Hargreaves, 2000). Learning communities, on the other hand, refer to teachers' supporting each other in enhancing the quality of education in a school culture that is open to learning and development (DuFour, R. DuFour, R., Eaker & Many, 2006). In professional learning communities, teachers describe themselves as a community for improving the school based on a culture of collaboration (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Within these communities, teachers are expected to develop themselves and perform more professional behaviours. Besides, based on both research and theory, it can be hypothesised that teachers' professional behaviours are related to learning communities. Collaboration among the personnel and professional cooperation are influential on the development of professional behaviours (Tschannen-Moran Parish, DiPaolo 2006). Teachers' perceptions of professionalism increase in a school where individuals support each other (Webb et al., 2004). The dominance of a support-oriented culture including school administrators and colleagues contribute to teachers' professional behaviours (Kılınç, 2014). Teachers who participate in professional learning communities feel less lonely, help the school reach its goals, gain a sense of responsibility for students' development, and have an increased satisfaction and high spirits (Hord, 1997). As teachers support each other in terms of instructional experiences, it can be argued that the level of sharing experiences and practice-based activities would increase, and in this way, they would perform professional behaviours at higher levels. Accordingly, it is of significance to examine the characteristics of professional learning communities that would ensure the development of professional behaviours in teachers.

In the Turkish context, studies on teachers' professional behaviours are quite new and limited in the literature (Cerit, 2012; Çelik, 2015; Kılınç, 2014; Koşar, 2015). Besides, investigating the relationship of this concept with different variables is expected to contribute to professional development. This gap in the Turkish context is a justification for conducting the present study. On the other hand, it is stated in the literature that studies on professional learning communities are mostly theoretical in scope, and it is of significance to reveal the relationships of this concept with other variables (Öğdem, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for different empirical studies related to professional learning communities in schools. In addition, results of this study can extend the literature by contributing to the accumulation of knowledge towards researchers and practitioners. Revealing the characteristics of professional learning communities that influence teachers' professional behaviours is expected to provide practitioners and policy makers certain findings related to the development of professionalism.

Teacher professionalism

Profession, professionalisation and teacher professionalism

In a profession, individuals do their job by using their training and experience, practise it in the best way with the least mistake, and prove this to other people. As for professionalisation, it is about gaining professional competence and characteristics (Gökçora, 2005). Professionalism emphasises the expert knowledge, autonomy and responsibility that direct the practitioners of a profession (Bayhan, 2011), and the behaviours towards increasing the quality of the service provided (Cerit, 2012). In this regard, it can be stated that the concepts of professionalisation and professionalism are related to each other. Gaining competence in the profession enables practitioners to take more initiatives, and thus, contributes to professionalism.

Studies on professionalism are new to the educational literature. Professionalism is a concept that is associated with a profession and professionalisation, and is still a matter of discussion (Raymond, 2006). The present study focused on teachers' professional behaviours in the field of education. Professionalism refers to implementing higher quality applications towards improving practice (Hargreaves, 2000), commitment to working with high standards (Agezo, 2009) and work with a researcher's rationale (Kincheloe, 2004). Teacher professionalism is related to teachers' commitment in their work, collaboration with colleagues, respecting and helping each other, job involvement and behaviours towards enhancing the quality of instruction (Tschannen-Moran, Parish & DiPaola, 2006). When teachers synthesise their knowledge, skills and experiences with practice and personal qualities, professional behaviours are exhibited (Gil'meeva, 1999). In education, professionalism is closely related to both teacher qualifications and how the society perceives the teaching profession (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Professionalism emphasises teachers' in- and out-of-class practices, and new applications to address high expectations related to students. Besides, teacher professionalism makes reference to the efforts for improving teachers' qualifications and expertise.

For Hargreaves (2000), teacher professionalism went through four different periods. These periods were pre-professionalism in which teaching was seen as a simple and technical profession, professional autonomy in which autonomy was highlighted and how instruction should done was questioned, collective working in which the professional learning culture that brought collaboration in schools emerged, and post-professionalism in which the school and the teaching profession were questioned and redefined.

Characteristics of teacher professionalism

Teacher professionalism has been discussed with reference to different contexts and approaches. According to Evans (2011), teacher professionalism consists of a competency dimension that improves learning, a dimension of attitudes towards the teaching profession, and a mental dimension that includes competence, producing new ideas, and making evaluations on how to teach. For Lai and Lo (2007), professional knowledge on teaching and learning strategies, responsibility and authority that represent teachers' duties and responsibilities, and teacher autonomy that is related to teachers' originality and taking initiatives in their profession are among the explicit dimensions of teacher professional behaviours. On the other hand, Rizvi and Elliot (2005) regarded professionalism in the context of teachers' competencies, applications, collaboration and leadership. Therefore, it is seen that teacher professionalism is of importance in taking responsibilities towards student learning (Timperley, 2008). In a comprehensive report on teacher professionalism by OECD (2016), it is addressed with the dimensions of autonomy, collaboration with colleagues and professional knowledge. Based on the studies cited above, it can be stated that teacher professional behaviours emphasise taking initiatives about instruction, being authorised, and taking responsibility for student learning as the technical essence of the school.

The characteristics examined in empirical studies on revealing teacher professional behaviours have common or different aspects. These characteristics include constant development through professional

collaboration and in-service trainings, in-class observation and assessment of students (Hoque, Alam & Abdullah, 2011), teachers' efforts in developing themselves (Murphy & Calway, 2008), increasing professional knowledge, contributing to the institution, and emotional labour (Yılmaz & Altınkurt, 2014). In addition, constant-learning-oriented expertise, autonomy that refers to individuals' commitment to their job, and responsibility that aims for the necessary technical skills are also addressed (Bayhan, 2011). In these studies, common behaviours of professionalism include teachers' professional development, efforts for improving expertise, and activities towards better practice in the profession.

Schools as professional learning communities

Professional learning and professional learning communities

Professional learning is individuals' accumulation of knowledge, skills and experience in their profession. In this process, teachers question themselves constantly, and think about what and how students learn (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007). As for professional learning communities, they are formed by combining the concepts of professional learning and community. The focus of professional learning communities at schools is on professional expertise, student learning and student needs (Morrisey, 2000).These communities are discussed with reference to change, school development, learning organisations, effective schools and innovations (Mullen, 2009). They initiate as teachers guide others with their experiences, and continue as they influence each other (DuFour, 2003). At the same time, while these communities feature collaboration among teachers, they also emphasise colleagues' supporting and improving each other to make the school more effective and conduct activities towards enhancing student learning and achievement (DuFour, 2003; Hord, 1997). Professional learning communities can be described as work groups that focus on developing teachers' capacity, knowledge, skills and experiences, and support efforts for student learning.

Professional learning communities have an important place in ensuring school effectiveness. They are related to creating a learning capacity in organisations (Hord, 1997). Professional learning communities enable the school staff to have a detailed look at the instructional process and focus on the practices that can be more effective for student achievement (Morrissey, 2000), whereas attribute great importance to address problems (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999), and teachers work together to achieve what they cannot achieve alone (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Members of these communities create a vision to help all students learn, and monitor and intervene in monitor student learning (DuFour, R. DuFour, R., Eaker & Many, 2006). Accordingly, it can be stated that professional learning communities are structures that aim for constant professional development in a collaborative environment by putting student learning and achievement in the centre.

Functions and dimensions of professional learning communities, and duties of teachers and administrators

Functionality of professional learning communities in schools is achieved with different elements. Professional learning communities have an important organisational function in teachers' development of skills and knowledge regarding instructional and educational processes. These communities at schools are related to improving and evaluating instruction, and colleagues' learning different practices from each other (Mangrum, 2004). Teachers' improving their instructional activities, generalising good practices and taking responsibility ensure the functionality of professional learning communities (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). By sharing knowledge and skills, and having professional development through professional learning communities at schools, the professional development of teachers who are not competent at the professional level are enabled, and by improving schools, school capacities are enhanced (Wang, Wang, Li & Li, 2017). Professional learning communities enable the sharing of practical applications among teachers

who have different levels of experience and knowledge, and indirectly affect school development. Teachers within a professional learning community can make learning constant with a set of activities. In professional learning communities, teachers' classroom observations, preparing common lesson plans and guiding new colleagues are among the important activities (Wang et al., 2017). In addition, student achievement is monitored across the school and measures are taken (Johnson, 2012). In other words, it can be stated that professional learning communities are in the centre of the activities towards ensuring the sharing of any type of experiences, and gathered teachers around a common vision.

The effectiveness of professional learning communities at schools can be addressed in different dimensions. In this regard, the models proposed by Hord (1997, 2004) and DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008) present conceptual frameworks in the literature There is a five-dimensional framework developed by Hord (1997, 2004) for organisations to be structured as effective professional learning communities. In an effective professional learning community, this framework includes the following: (a) shared beliefs, values and vision, (b) shared and supportive leadership, (c) collective learning and leadership, (d) supportive conditions, (e) shared personal practice. On the other hand, DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008) proposes a different model for professional learning communities. This model contains (a) having shared objectives, vision and values towards student achievement, (b) creative a learning-oriented collaborative culture, (c) collective openness to the best practices related to teaching and learning, (d) action learning: learning by doing, (e) commitment to constant improvement, (f) making evaluations based on concrete results. The common aspects of these two frameworks are features of professional learning communities such as teachers' planning, applying and evaluating any type of work towards student learning, and collaborating, assessing results and taking measures to improve the profession.

The conceptual framework adopted in the present study was a synthesis of the frameworks proposed by Hord (1997, 2004) and DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008) The dimensions of this synthesis were shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. These dimensions and their properties are as follows (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Morrisey, 2000; Olivier, Hipp & Huffman, 2003; Öğdem, 2015): (a) *Shared and supportive leadership* is about ensuring the participation in decisions by sharing responsibility and power related to policy and practices. The school leader prepares the environment for collaboration and shared the leadership at school. (b) *Shared values and vision* focus on student learning. Teaching and learning processes are emphasised. (c) *Supportive conditions* enable professional learning communities to come together, and create a culture and climate for learning. (d) There are *supportive conditions related to the structure*. Elements such as sufficiency of resources, time capability and school size constitute this structure. (e) The dimension *supportive conditions related to relationships* refer to confidence, respect and positive relationships among community members. (f) *Collective learning and applications* represent specifying methods towards meeting different learning needs and sharing instructional applications. Teachers become more competent. They set high standards in all areas and find productive solutions to problems through professional relationships. The relationships between teachers and administrators get strengthened efforts towards improving schools increase.

In order for schools to be structured as professional learning communities, a set of duties fall to school administrators and teachers. Towards collective learning and practice inn schools as professional learning communities, teachers should be a source provider, an educational expert, an instructional expert, an instructional facilitator and a coach, and take the responsibility of the school leadership, follow students based on data, be a catalyst for change and a good learner (Harrison & Killon, 2007). They should also organise events in schools, determine shared vision and values, adopt the school vision, apply the determined vision to the school conditions, follow short- and long-term goals, and conduct studies as researchers (Cormier & Olivier, 2009). A healthy school culture, collaboration and professional development in schools can enable teachers to focus on student achievement (Cohen & Brown, 2013). In schools that are structured as professional learning communities, the role, responsibility and duty of school administrators can be described as leadership, empowerment, cooperation and communication (Öğdem, 2015). Besides, with regard to professional learning communities, school administrators should focus on student and teacher learning, create a culture of collaboration and development, monitor and evaluate

results, and ensure cooperation among teachers to improve student learning (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Hord & Sommers, 2008). It can thus be argued that organisational and personal variables related to administrators and teachers should be carefully studied to be able to form professional learning communities. In this respect, administrators should create environments that would encourage collaboration and in which they can share their leadership. Teachers, on the other hand, should protect and adopt the vision towards enhancing student learning at school. When these conditions are met, schools can be professional learning communities.

In terms of the school outcomes, learning communities can be thought to be related to teachers' professional behaviours. Professional learning communities enhance motivation in teachers and equip them with different skills. At the same time, a positive learning environment emerges with a positive learning climate and a support-based understanding (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, Thomas, 2006). A change begins within the organisation due to colleagues' improving each other at school (Johnson, 2012). Therefore, competences related to teaching improve, and an increase is achieved in student achievement (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009). At this point, teachers would take more responsibilities towards student learning. In this case, they could start performing more professional behaviours.

Considering the arguments above, it is thought that there may be a relationship between teacher professionalism and the levels of schools for being professional learning communities. Therefore, in this study, the relationships between the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, and teacher professionalism were examined. The following research questions were addressed based on this aim:

1. What are the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, and the levels of teacher professionalism based on teachers' perceptions?

2. Is there a significant relationship between the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, and teacher professionalism based on teachers' perceptions?

3. Are the levels of schools for being professional learning communities a significant predictor of teacher professionalism based on teachers' perceptions?
    the conversion can be either way.

METHOD

Research Design
In this study designed in correlational model, teacher professionalism was the dependent variables, whereas the sub-dimensions of schools being professional learning communities including shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and applications, shared personal practice, supportive conditions related to structure, and supportive conditions related to relationships were the independent variables.

Participants
The participants of the study were teachers working in the Eyüp district of Istanbul during the 2016-2017 school year. A total of 543 teachers who were in this district and could be reached participated in the study. Due to certain limitations in terms of time, money and workforce, the sample was selected from units that were convenient and suitable for the research procedure. Among these participants, 344 were female (63%), and 199 were male (37%). Elementary, teachers at middle and high school located in the Eyüp district participated in the study. The age average of the participants was 35.5. Their year of service was 13 years in average, and the average time during which they worked at their current school was 4.77.

Data Gathering Tools:
Teacher Professionalism

This scale was developed by Tschannen-Moran, Parish and DiPaola (2006), and adapted to Turkish by Cerit (2012). It contained eight items and was rated on 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The teacher professionalism scale measured the teachers' levels of exhibiting professional behaviours. Samples items included "In this school, teachers do their job with great enthusiasm", and "In this school, the communication among teachers is collaborative". The explained variance in this unidimensional scale was 61.62%. The analysis revealed a Cronbach's Alpha value of .90 for the scale (Cerit, 2012).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine whether the eight items and unidimensional structure of the teacher professionalism scale exhibited a good fit with the research data. According to the results of the CFA, there was an acceptable model-data fit. The factor loading values of the items in the scale ranged between .40 and .91 (X^2 =33.201; p < .05; sd = 16; X^2/sd = 2.07; RMSEA = .045; CFI = .99). In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as .88. As a result, it was concluded that the unidimensional structure was valid for the present study.

Professional Learning Community Scale

The scale was developed by Olivier, Hipp and Huffman (2003), and adapted to Turkish by Öğdem (2015). It contained 48 items and six sub-dimensions. A 5-point Likert scale from "(1) Strongly Disagree" to "(5) Strongly Agree" was used in the scale. The dimensions were (i) shared and supportive leadership, (ii) shared values and vision, (iii) collective learning and applications, (iv) shared personal practice, (v) supportive conditions-relationships, and (vi) supportive conditions-structure. Sample items include "Members of the school can easily access the information related to school", and "Administrators and teachers take responsibility to enrich instruction". In his study, Öğdem (2015) reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of .80 and .90 regarding reliability.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine whether the 48 items and six-dimension structure of the Professional Learning Community Scale exhibited a good fit with the research data. The six dimensions in the scale were confirmed. The factor loading values of the items in the scale ranged between .57 and .85 (X^2 =3.083.38; p < .05; sd = 1058; X^2/sd = 2.91; RMSEA = .059; CFI = .91). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients calculated in this study were .94 for shared and supportive leadership, .90 for shared values and vision, .93 for collective learning and applications, .92 for shared personal practice, .88 for supportive conditions-relationships, and .93 for supportive conditions-structure. The reliability coefficient of the whole scale was .98. As a result, it was concluded that the six-dimension structure was valid for the present study.

Data Analysis

SPSS 17 was used for data analysis. Whether there were multiple changes, missing data and outliers were examined. The arithmetic means of the levels of schools for being professional learning communities and teacher professionalism were calculated. In order to reveal the relationships between the variables, Pearson Produc-Moment Correlation Coefficient and the 'enter' method in Multiple-Linear Regression were employed.

Assumptions regarding regression analysis were tested in the study. As a result of the analysis, it was found that there was no tolerance value close to zero, the D-W value was 1.89, and the VIF values were lower than 10. Since the correlations between the predictive variables ranged between (r=.77) and (r=.86), multicollinearity was suspected. This is because tolerance value being lower than .20, VIF value being higher than 10, CI value being higher than 30, and the correlations between independent variables being .90 and above show that there is multicollinearity at a serious level (Büyüköztürk, 2010). However, when

the CI, VIF and tolerance values were evaluated together, it was assumed that there was no multicollinearity problem. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data were between -1 and +1, or were close to these values. The skewness and kurtosis values being between -1 and +1 show normal distribution (Şencan, 2005). Besides, the data were assumed to have a normal distribution based on mode, median and arithmetic mean values, normal Q-Q graph, and skewness and kurtosis values.

As for the fit indices used while conducting confirmatory factor analysis, GFI is accepted as good fit if the coefficient obtained from AGFI is .85 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984 & Cole, 1987) or .90 (Kline, 2005; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996) or over .80 (Doll, Xia & Torkzadeh,1994). Values obtained from RMSEA that are .10 and below are regarded as sufficient for fitness. The ratio of χ2/df being between 2-5 refers to good fit, whereas it being lower than 2 refers to perfect fit (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001).

FINDINGS

Relationships Between Variables

Table 1 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations related to the dependent and independent variables, and the coefficients of the relationships between these variables.

Table 1. Relationships Between the Levels of Schools for Being Professional Learning Communities, and Teacher Professionalism

Variables		SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Professionalism	3.91	.65	1	.42[**]	.44[**]	.48[**]	.45[**]	.44[**]	.38[**]	.47[**]
Professional Learning Community Scale										
2.Shared and supportive leadership	3.77	.79		1	.83[**]	.80[**]	.77[**]	.77[**]	.76[**]	.91[**]
3.Shared values and vision.	3.76	.80			1	.84[**]	.77[**]	.79[**]	.76[**]	.90[**]
4.Collective learning and applications.	3.76	.75				1	.86[**]	.84[**]	.77[**]	.93[**]
5.Shared personal practice	3.65	.80					1	.83[**]	.77[**]	.90[**]
6.Supportive conditions- Relationships	3.67	.78						1	.82[**]	.91[**]
7.Supportive conditions- Structures	3.71	.85							1	.90[**]
8.Whole Scale [Professional Learning Community]	3.72	0.71								1
** p < .05										

Based on the arithmetic mean for teacher professionalism, it can be stated that the teachers' levels of exhibiting professional behaviours were high. The levels of schools for being professional learning communities were also examined in this study based on teachers' perceptions. It was found that the levels of schools for being professional learning communities were above the moderate level according to the perceptions of the teachers. The perceptions on the sub-dimensions of shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, and collective learning and applications were higher than those on shared personal practice, supportive conditions for relationships and supportive conditions for structures. Besides, the sub-dimensions were also found to be above the moderate level (see Table 1).

The results of the correlation analysis revealed significantly positive relationships between teacher professionalism, and shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and applications, shared personal practice, supportive conditions for relationships and supportive conditions for structures. It can be inferred that professional behaviours would increase with the levels of schools for being professional learning communities (See Table 1).

Predicting Professionalism

Table 2 presents the results of the multiple-linear regression analysis regarding the prediction of teacher professionalism by the levels of schools for being professional learning communities.

Table 2. Results of the Multiple-Regression Analysis for the relationship between teacher professionalism and the levels of schools for being professional learning communities

Variables (Being professional learning communities)	B	SHB	β	t	p
Constant	2.32	.13		17.73	.000
Shared and supportive leadership	.05	.06	.07	.86	.390
Shared values and vision.	.06	.07	.08	.92	.357
Collective learning and applications.	.20	.08	.23	2.47	.014
Shared personal practice	.10	.07	.12	1.51	.132
Supportive conditions- Relationships	.10	.06	.13	1.58	.115
Supportive conditions- Structures	-.09	.06	-.11	-1.56	.120
$R = .49.$ $R^2 = .25.$ F = 29.28. $p < .05$					

According to the results of the regression analysis, shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and applications, shared personal practice, supportive conditions for relationships and supportive conditions for structures together explained 25% of the total variance in teacher professionalism. Based on the standardised regression coefficients, the variables were listed in order of importance as collective learning and applications, supportive conditions-relationships, shared personal practice, supportive conditions-structures, shared values and vision, and shared and supportive leadership, respectively. Collective learning and applications were found to be the only significantly positive predictor of teacher professionalism. Therefore, collective learning and applications can be said to be an important variable predicting teacher professionalism.

CONCLUSIONS

Significant results of this study can be summarised as follows: (i) The teachers' perceptions on schools being professional learning communities, and their performing professional behaviours were above the moderate level, (ii) There were significantly positive relationships between teacher professionalism, and shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and applications, shared personal practice, supportive conditions for relationships and supportive conditions for structures; It was also seen that teachers' levels of performing professional behaviours could be high depending on the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, (iii) Among the professional learning community dimensions, only collective learning and applications were found to significantly predict professional behaviours.

In order for teachers to perform professional behaviours, there are certain practices that can be implemented by school administrators and teachers towards structuring a professional learning community. Teachers can share instructional materials with their colleagues, make discussions about the most suitable methods to teach students, follow new instructional techniques, set a model for new teachers, and taking the leader role from the administrator to actualise the school vision (Harrison & Killon, 2007). They can organise events in schools, determine shared vision and values, adopt the school vision, apply the determined vision to the school conditions, follow short- and long-term goals, and conduct studies as researchers (Cormier & Olivier, 2009). School administrators can focus on student learning, create a culture of development, and monitor and assess results through practices of leadership, empowerment, cooperation and communication (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Hord & Sommers, 2008). An sincere environment based on mutual understanding and collaboration is of great importance for school administrators and teachers to turn schools into learning communities. In this sense, the leadership of

teachers and administrators is key to structuring these communities in schools. Administrators' and teachers' participation in any activity that can contribute to the organisation and sharing innovations at school can strengthen professional learning communities. As a result, effectiveness can be ensured in schools with these practices.

In this regard, the following suggestions can be offered: School-based practices can be emphasised to improve the levels of schools for being professional learning communities, and teachers' professional behaviours. Sample class presentations towards enhancing collaboration among colleagues, and meetings for teachers to share experiences on the solution of problems can be planned. Different social activities can be done to form a positive school culture. Principals can share certain responsibilities with teachers, and reward good examples. Leisure time events can be organised in which teachers can talk about education and instruction, and share their experiences. Teachers can observe each other's classes, and prepare common lesson plans. Experience sharing days can be organised with the participation of retired teachers. Teachers in different subject areas in the same school can carry out interdisciplinary studies. In this respect, there can be an effort in forming a positive school culture in which collective learning and applications are emphasised.

The following suggestions can be offered for researchers; the relationship of professional learning communities at schools with different variables can be investigated. As schools have the characteristic of being professional learning communities, mixed-method studies can be conducted to reveal how this is achieved. In addition, the relationship of professionalism that is a variable influential in students' achievement can be examined with reference to different variables. In this context, causal studies can be carried out. Considering that the literature on professional learning communities in Turkish schools is quite new, scales that can be used in the Turkish context can be developed.

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