



## **Drivers and Barriers to Professional Development: The Lived Experiences of Elementary School Principals**

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### Abstract:

The research was conducted with the aim of identifying the drivers and obstacles for the professional development of elementary school principals. The current research is qualitative study. The statistical population was the principals of public elementary schools. Using the purposeful snowball sampling method, 22 school principals from the education districts of Tehran were selected as a sample, and the theoretical saturation of the data was observed in the interview of the 20<sup>th</sup> person. A semi-structured interview was used as a tool. The data was analyzed by theoretical coding (Open, axial and selective coding) according to the answers provided to the three research questions. In the review of the current situation of the professional development of principals, 5 components were obtained, regarding factors affecting the professional development of Principals, 9 components were obtained, and in the review of obstacles to the professional development of Principals, 3 components were obtained. Based on the results of the research, it was found that the principals of educational institutions are facing issues and problems, which, by solving them, helped the professional development and capabilities of the principals. Finally, professional development indicators were presented in 5 scientific, skill, organizational, personal and cultural-social sectors.

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## Introduction

Education is considered the engine of human development and training of the force and has a special place. For a large organization such as education, manpower is a determining factor for designing and implementing development programs. The education of students and the progress of educational departments are affected by the participation of Principals in professional development activities. Professional development of Principals plays an important role in school reform activities. Also, professional development and increasing the knowledge and skills of administrators is a prerequisite for success in improving education (Richter *et al.*, 2011); Therefore, for the progress of reform efforts, more time should be devoted to the learning of Principals and their professional development programs (Jaafarirad *et al.*, 2019).

The purpose of professional development programs is to help principals who have received their initial training complete their learning, and sometimes includes all the learning that experienced Principals have learned from classes and personal and private reading. Sometimes this concept is also used to describe the progress of Principals in knowledge and skills (Craft, 2001). Principals experience a wide range of actions and interactions that can increase their knowledge and skills, which are effective to some extent in the personal, social and emotional growth of Principals. These experiences include formal in-service training and informal day-to-day experiences such as conversations with others (Desimon, 2009). Mainly, professional development refers to the

development of a person in his professional role and includes formal and informal experiences (formal experiences: participation in formal university courses, workshops, conferences and professional meetings; informal experiences: reading professional magazines, watching programs on academic field). Professional development is the process of acquiring skills, professional knowledge, values and personal competencies that enable Principals to be constantly in line with the educational system. It is the sum of formal and informal learning experiences that people receive in the entire professionalization process of these trainings before service until retirement (Ganser, 2000). Van Driel (2006) believes that professional development is a method of learning a job over time. Also, he gives importance and emphasizes on having an organized method (cited by Cizink and Powell, 2009).

According to Bolm (1993), professional development is a set of activities that Principals engage in to increase and improve professional knowledge and skills, determine professional values, and empower their students in the field of learning and education more effectively. In other words, professional development should lead to the personal, professional and moral development of Principals (Sali, 2011). The theme that was common in all the mentioned definitions is the emphasis on improving the knowledge, attitude and skills of Principals in all stages of career path and learning (Fielder, 2010).

The success of today's organizations depends primarily on its management capital. An organization that does not

have a high-quality Principal definitely does not have superior employees, because in this situation people leave the organization instead of being attracted to it (Norad, Navebrahim, Arasteh, Zainabadi, 2017). According to Jahdi Mostali Baglo (2016), professional development is achieved when organizations provide the necessary opportunity through improving educational, economic, administrative and environmental conditions to improve skills and knowledge related to employees' activities; Therefore, the main axis in professional development is the existence of the necessary conditions and space for growth and new skills for employees. Taheri et al. (2012) also stated that the professional development of Principals is "planned processes and activities in order to increase the knowledge, skills and professional attitudes of Principals so that they can improve the learning of students." This definition gives a wide scope for the professional development of Principals, however, new approaches to professional development are in favor of lifelong learning and do not consider professional learning as a short-term intervention, rather they consider the professional development of Principals as a long-term activity, the scope of which is the education of Principals in the university to the courses In addition to service during employment and individual study, it includes Principals. The final goal of the professional development of Principals is to transfer professional learning to the classroom and school environment and, accordingly, the academic progress of students. This importance is influenced by the context in which the professional development of Principals takes place (Taheri *et al.*, 2012).

Therefore, the Principal is considered as a key lever in the management of the organization, and the presence of a capable Principal in the organization who can lead the organization towards its goals and objectives in dealing with challenges and obstacles is known as a competitive advantage (Arasteh, Hasanpour, Izadi, Bostani, 2014) most Principals engage in official professional development activities such as participating in courses, seminars, and in-service courses. Also, studies have shown that professional Principals spend several hours per week learning informally with their colleagues about topics related to their work (Campana, 2014) and the professional development of Principals through collaboration among them is considered a key factor for their success (Maki & Garcia, 2016).

Jafarirad et al. (2021) in their study 12 general categories of central phenomena (required knowledge, required attitude, required skills), strategies (creating growth centers, providing direct training, implicit (experimental) training), context (existence of collaborative work culture, supportive atmosphere, decentralized structure) and consequences (improving the quality of learning, organizational growth, professional development to increase the competence and capability of Principals).

Hosseini, Ghorchian and Nader Qoli (2021) showed that Principals can be divided into two core categories of general and professional qualifications and competencies Principals, contextual conditions, three issues of society culture, environmental conditions and the prevailing atmosphere; causal conditions in the three general categories of tasks and missions of

education and training, the nature and complexity of Principals' jobs and job diversity; strategies in both individual and organizational fields, including the growth of Principals, education Principals should pay attention to role models and criteria for development, selection and monitoring and evaluation as well as consequences in three educational, individual and social sectors.

Kamrei et al. (2021) in their study for the professional development of Principals, 10 dimensions of knowledge, attitude, intellectual and mental abilities, managerial abilities, functional management skills, interpersonal skills, management skills of excellence and improvement, transformational leadership skills, professional and job skills, they identified psychological and personality traits. Hadian Niasri's research (2019) showed that educational management is faced with the problems of lack of new ideas, predominance of individual activities over collective, lack of strategic planning and ignorance of the usefulness of implemented programs (lack of evaluation) and the continuation of this process will definitely cost a lot of money in the future. The educational system will produce.

Hatami, Haj Khozaimeh, Pourkarimi, Abili (2019) in their research introduced the components of professional development of Principals in universities and higher education institutions in five main categories including: leadership/management skills, teaching skills, research skills, personal skills and consulting skills. Based on the findings of the research of Hasanzadeh Kafegar Kalai et al. (2019), the professional development model of Principals with a future research

approach consists of four dimensions of skills needed by Principals and capabilities needed by Principals and the function of executive responsibility of Principals and the function of organizational development and improvement. Jafarirad (2018) showed in his study that the main strategy in the competence process of school principals is to create growth centers, provide direct training and implicit (experimental) training. The necessary background conditions also include the existence of a collaborative work culture, a supportive atmosphere and a decentralized structure, i.e., a desirable program that is designed and implemented with the participation and consensus of Principals, taking into account the need for continuous growth, material and spiritual support, and prevailing changes in the direction of the competence of Principals. and the final result of its implementation is to improve the quality of learning, organizational growth and professional development.

In the research of Rahimi, Koroneh, Ahanchian (2018), it was found that the criteria for selecting Principals in the appointment of professional Principals do not have the necessary ability, and the interviewees' point of view indicates the lack of targeted programs and opportunities for the selection and professional development of school Principals. According to the research of Esfahani, Soleimani, Torani and Sabahi (2018), the factors affecting the professional development of school principals in the horizon of the vision document 1404 include the eight main categories of technology, religion, culture, individual, social, economy, politics and organization.

Hosseini, Talebpour and Bagheri (2018) tried to present a model for the development of the competence of Principals with a future research approach in educational organizations by conducting research that introduced the categories of managerial competences, group competences and individual competences. Tarhani and his colleagues carried out a research under the title "Designing a model for training Principals", the result of their research is a model with 12 categories of program development, content adjustment according to competencies, teaching learning strategies, organizing learning strategies, formulating goals, specifying evaluation criteria, implementing evaluation, Teaching skills, paying attention to the needs of the individual and society, was justice-oriented, using teaching models, expertise and expertise (Tarhani, Abdullahi, Zainabadi and Abbasian, 2018).

The results of the study by Ghasemian Dastjardi et al. (2018) indicate the importance of the professional leadership role of Principals in the professional growth of teachers and, as a result, increasing the competence of students. Rostami and Yousefi (2018) concluded in their research that the management skills and professional development of primary school principals are desirable and the appointed principals have the necessary professional development abilities and management skills, and to prioritize the skill of improving education and individual professional development in the first ranks of the variables and declared that there is a positive and significant relationship between managerial skills and professional development of Principals.

According to the research of Najafi, Ghahrani, Abolghasemi and Arefi (2017), the model of professional qualifications of preschool center Principals includes six main components of general knowledge, specialized knowledge, general ability, specialized ability, general skill, and specialized skill. Naraghizadeh (2017) stated in his study that for the effectiveness of school leadership, it is necessary to pay attention to the characteristics of school members, i.e., teachers, staff and students. Esfahani and Esfahani (2017) in their research, the methods of providing optimal professional development from the point of view of Principals, including participation in workshops, seminars, lectures and national and regional conferences, reading (books, articles, online resources); They mentioned university courses, counseling, Principals' brainstorming sessions, coaching, visiting other schools (observation) and internships.

Asadi Chegini (2017) in his study reached the results that the components of professional development of primary school principals, in order of priority and based on the opinion of experts in this field, are communication with society, scientific-research self-management, administrative affairs and support, teaching, learning and communication activities. It is with the parents. According to the research findings of Hosseini, Azizi, Izadi (2017), the decisions and actions of educational leaders play a role in the continuous professional development of Principals. Also, leadership styles are effective on the continuous professional development of Principals. Asghari, Abdullahi, Kishori, Jalalund (2017) introduced the professional

development needs of school principals including five general categories: educational leadership, organizational management and leadership, ethical leadership, social participation and technology.

Tatari Blahsur, Hosseinpour (2016) concluded in his study that there is a meaningful relationship between supervision and guidance of Principals with professional development, accountability and psychological empowerment. Therefore, it is recommended that educational supervision and guidance be considered important in schools so that they can better help teachers. In their study, Farahbakhsh et al. (2016) found that the professional qualifications of school principals are: management expertise, teaching experience, human relations skills, art, social ethics, and motivation.

According to the research findings of Jahdi Mostali Baglo (2016), in-service training, organizational communication, salary and benefits, job commitment and job satisfaction have a direct and significant effect on the professional development of school principals. Also, the effect of job independence, collaborative management, organizational culture, education level and service experience in the professional development of secondary school principals is indirect and significant. Also, Nourad Sadiq, Nove Ebrahim, Arasteh and Zainabadi (2016) determined in their research that the dimensions of professional development of school principals include three components: creating opportunities for career development, creating opportunities for personal development, and encouraging principals to improve themselves. Also, Farhadi and Sadeghi (2015) in their

research with the aim of determining the requirements of human resources development in the horizon of 2022 with a future research approach, achieved the four dimensions of individual requirements, organizational requirements, managerial requirements and environmental requirements.

Nasiri Valikbani, Ghanbari and Sarchehani (2015) conducted a research with the aim of developing a conceptual model for the development of primary school principals and came to the conclusion that the central and focal phenomenon in the growth process of school principals is the participatory development program, that is, a desirable program that involves participation and The concurrence of Principals should be designed and implemented in line with modern global developments in order to boost Principals, and the ultimate goal of its implementation should be to educate capable and creative citizens; School management in today's world is not just managing, organizing, supervising and guiding and creating order in the school, but today, educational leaders in schools must have personal characteristics and special professional skills to be able to face and respond to the growing needs of students. Therefore, there is an urgent need to prepare, improve and develop educational Principals and leaders at various levels.

Ghanbari and Mohammadi (2015) included six main categories of causal conditions, central phenomenon (professional development of school principals), professional development strategies of school principals, mediating conditions, intervening conditions and consequences of principals' professional development in the professional development model of

school principals. The research of Hayat, Abdulahi, Zainabadi and Arasteh (2014) indicated that the professional development needs of middle school principals include the general category of educational leadership, management and organizational leadership, ethical leadership, social participation and creativity. It has 14 sub-categories. Also, the methods of providing professional development that are desirable from the point of view of Principals, including participation in workshops, seminars, lectures and national and regional conferences, reading (books, articles, online resources) university courses. Ahi, consultation, meetings of principals, coaching, visits to other schools (observation) and was an internship.

In his research, Yang (2023) tried to create a knowledge base and standard for understanding the development of educational leadership by describing the structure of the professional development of educational leaders and the changes affecting the professionalization of educational leaders. Brockman et al. (2020) stated in their study that school principals with poor knowledge should be trained, so the main programs for the preparation and empowerment of principals should be guided by a more careful examination and the problems of school principals should be solved on the spot and more attention should be paid to school leaders. In the study of Gomes et al. (2020), it was found that the professional development of Principals plays a vital role in improving the learning outcomes of students, and there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the professional development of school Principals and leadership practices. Also, Johnson et al. (2020)

concluded that Principals should have constructive communication with each other to identify professional development needs through interaction. In the study of Liliogerd *et al.* (2020), it was found that the evaluation of teachers' performance by administrators plays a role in the learning and professional leadership of teachers, so school leaders and teachers need a common understanding as well as a knowledge base for professional development. Luciuki (2020) concluded in his study that structural factors such as insufficient support for professional development, insufficient resources, lack of appropriate training and issues related to learning culture including limitations related to professional development among teachers and school administrators at the high school level. It is in Tanzania. Also, the research of Klein et al. (2020) in 9 states of Germany showed that many school Principals in Germany have not received any interesting formal training for management and leadership duties and they need detailed and relevant training for the role of leadership in schools.

The study of Fancera (2020) showed that the media and social networks have an effective role in constructive communication and the performance of teachers and school administrators. According to Sahlin (2019), from the point of view of school principals, cooperation between schools and private companies is very effective as a means of improving principals' performance and has played a great role in improving principals' performance, especially in the field of cultural development, and this cooperation is based on the school's needs and the special activities and needs of

principals. and has had good effectiveness.

Nedrito et al. (2019) concluded in their study that there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and the professional development of school principals. Also, the survey study of Khalid Taher (2020) in Kuwait showed that learning skills in the era of information technology, thoughtful thinking skills, effective communication and productivity skills are effective in the professional development of school principals. In their study, Gayhurst *et al.* (2019) found that the professional development of school principals plays an important role in teachers' leadership functions and educational activities and in general the professional development of teachers. Paul Close and Ann Kendrick (2018) concluded in research that values and ethics programs and curriculum counseling and political coaching and organizational analysis and mobilization of knowledge and skills of counseling and counseling relationships are part of counseling development programs are school principals in England.

In the research of Wang and Liu (2018), five areas in the leadership development of school principals were determined as key dimensions that need further improvement, and the job motivations of assistants, the influence of social culture on the professional development of principals, the professional development needs of new principals, cooperation between the university and the leader. It includes education and the influence of Principals on school performance and professional development of teachers. These areas are necessary for the success of the effective professional

development of school administrators. McCracken (2017) also showed in his research that the professional development of Principals includes the five main characteristics of content, active learning, collective participation, duration and coherence, which these five main characteristics directly affect the knowledge, attitude and professional performance of Principals and success. It affects students. Also, according to Brabham's research (2017), educational leadership is one of the important aspects of student success and the overall success of schools. Principals, as educational leaders, need to rethink and think continuously about their competencies. In his research, Wiese (2017) concluded that the principal himself, the regional supervisor, and the staff development coordinator have the greatest influence on professional development activities in the selection of Principals.

The National Association of American School Principals has introduced the leadership dimensions of school principals in six dimensions, which the principals' evaluation system is related to. These six dimensions are: 1- professional growth and learning; 2- The growth and academic progress of students; 3- School planning and progress; 4- School culture; 5- Professional qualities and educational leadership; 6- Supporting and involving stakeholders (Clifford and Ross, 2015).

Also Reston (2015), in his research, the most important professional standards of school administrators in the professional development program are the mission, vision and fundamental values of educational leadership, ethics and compliance with specialized norms, organizational justice and accountability, educational and



curriculum, training and evaluation methods, process Caring and supporting students, improving the professional capabilities of school staff, developing professional programs for teachers and staff, employing and using the capacities of families and associations related to the school, research orientation and compliance with the principles of comprehensive school management and improvement have been introduced.

Hosseini and El-Abri (2015) conducted research on the professional development needs of school principals; The results showed that the principals of schools in Muscat, Oman, really need professional development to improve the educational and transformational leadership capacity. Based on the results of this research, school principals were unanimous that the government, especially the Ministry of Education of Oman, should adopt an integrated educational program for school principals across the country for their promotion and development. Also, in this study, the development needs of school principals in Oman were investigated and fifteen factors, including the needs of educational leadership, transformational leadership, and the design of a suitable model for the professional development of principals in the direction of educational requirements and changes, were identified as the most essential professional development needs of principals.

In a qualitative study, Shanwing, Ng and Singyng (2015) concluded that to improve the performance of school leadership preparation and professional development, the program developer should not only design and prepare a program for the learning needs of new

principals, but also provide new leaders with support. formal and informal preparation by peers and advisors, so that they try to apply what they have learned from their workplace and through learning streams or research projects. and the amount of change novice Principals needed as a result of the leadership professional development program. Also, Ng and Eszto (2015) found out from their research that most of the newly appointed school principals knew that there are several roles and responsibilities including: being a role model, being a coach, being a facilitator, being a principal, being a planner, being a curriculum leader, they will be responsible for being a visionary leader, resource seeker, etc. In this study, an attempt was made to design and prepare a professional development program to meet the professional development needs of a group of Principals who were recently appointed to manage schools.

Hilliard (2015) concluded in research that the opportunity provided to improve teaching, learning, research and development of leadership skills has the greatest impact on the development of Principals. According to Kanukorn et al. (2014) it is critical for Principals to feel that they are placed in a supportive environment. In a supportive organizational environment, Principals tend to actively participate in their professional development program, and the greater satisfaction of school Principals is determined by the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes, so they have to improve their knowledge, skills and professional qualifications.

Naiker and Naidu (2014) from the results of a qualitative research in the field of professional development of school principals, found that creating

learning opportunities, teamwork, social communication and improving collaborative leadership skills are effective in the professional development of school principals. In their research, Ng and Chan (2014) found that in the professional development program of school principals, things like interpersonal skills, crisis management, proper management of resources and knowledge of educational regulations are prioritized. Also, they recommended in their study that Principals' learning programs should be focused on Principals' special needs, content needs and multidimensionality of the method.

In research, Bayaristanova, Arnova and Nurmohammedtova (2014) have tried to compile the functions that are realized by education Principals, they showed in their research that although educational organizations are similar to other social organizations in terms of general principles and management methods. But educational organizations have special characteristics, so their management is different from other social organizations.

Therefore, for the effectiveness of education, educational reforms at the levels of qualified educational Principals are necessary. In the research of Militello *et al.* (2013), it was found that the three main dimensions of professional standards, including Principals' focus on group participation, focus on organizational policy, and focus on insight and self-awareness, had an interesting effect on Principals' performance; So that they explain 38% of the variance of Principals' professional performance (cited by Pourkrimi *et al.*, 2022).

Therefore, for transformation to occur in the education system,

transformation must start from management. In the country, few researches have been conducted in the area of professional development of school principals, and the current research, which was carried out with the aim of examining the professional development requirements of primary school principals, can be the starting point for correct and focused planning and a platform for studying available resources and achieving benefits and advantages. is created Therefore, examining the professional development of Principals in the current situation can play an important role in identifying key factors and planning for the professional development of school Principals in the social, cultural, economic, political, technological, individual, organizational and managerial dimensions of the future.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system requires an effective and efficient management. Educational Principals have different tasks and responsibilities, and each of these tasks and responsibilities requires having different skills. The diversity and complexity of the duties and functions of educational Principals is such that only experienced, professional and trained people can hold this position, because if they have the necessary skills and training, it enables the principal to perform his duties well. Therefore, the role of the principal in the education system is very important, and if this system wants to change, it should create a change in its management system (Farahbakhsh *et al.*, 2014).

Azahband (2013) believes that educational Principals, in addition to knowledge and information in the field of education and psychology, and mastery of practical methods and skills,

should have enough educational experience to be able to fulfill their main mission and problems and problems of their work. understand correctly. In addition, in terms of personality, they should be capable and adhere to moral principles and standards so that they can prevent deviations and deviations in the educational environment and set an example and role model for the students with their behavior and actions (Alagheband, 2011).

Looking at Iran's education system, it can be said that this organization has many issues and problems. On the one hand, school principals in Iran are still selected without professional and scientific criteria, and after becoming a teacher, they become school principals; On the other hand, there is no consistent professional standard and criteria for their professional preparation and development, also based on the evidence, it can be acknowledged that determining the criteria for selecting and appointing Principals and approving it in the Supreme Council of Education, instead of relying on research data and studies Comparative, mostly relies on the views and personal experiences of experts and council members (Safi, 2013).

According to Schleicher, educational Principals are not qualified and competent in the field of innovation, financial management or human resources and do not have the minimum leadership standards (Schleicher, 2012); Upon entering a new position, Principals feel weak, unprepared, lonely and isolated (Kraft, 2001). The evidence in Iran confirms that there is no special requirement and scientific criteria in this field; Even according to the available statistics, only 8% of school principals in Iran have a degree in educational

management (Halimi and Fathi-Azer, 2018). The lack of strict criteria and standards for the appointment and the lack of Principals having the necessary qualifications and ability has caused many of them to perform poorly in their management and leadership roles, while in countries with advanced education systems such as Japan and the United States of America, Passing the school management qualification test is a necessary condition for appointing people to school management positions (Abdollahi, 2013).

Therefore, according to the weaknesses in the characteristics of Principals, by creating the conditions for the professional development of school Principals, the grounds for realizing the goals of the education system in the field of development are provided. It is worth mentioning that most of the previous researches had paid attention to the problem in a quantitative way, so the researchers tried to investigate the problem and chose a qualitative approach for the purpose of fundamental investigation in order to investigate the lived experience of elementary school principals regarding their professional development and that of their peers and the factors affecting Professional development and the obstacles facing them should be identified.

This research aims to answer the main question "at what level do you know the current state of professional development of yourself and your peers during school management?". And the following two sub-questions were: 1. What are the factors affecting the professional development of elementary school principals? 2. What are the obstacles to the professional

development of elementary school principals?

### **Research Method**

In terms of the objectives of the current research, it is qualitative research. The field of the study was the principals of elementary school public schools. Using the purposeful snowball sampling method, 22 school principals from the educational districts of Tehran were selected as samples. A semi-structured interview form based on open coding and axial coding was used as a tool. The form was presented to the principals of the selected schools and interviews were conducted through coding, and the theoretical saturation of the data was observed in the interview of the 20<sup>th</sup> person. Based on this, the components and indicators introduced by school administrators were specified and prioritized. After drawing the components and indicators, it was again provided to the school administrators to validate it. The reliability and validity of the research tool was achieved by three-way consensus of data, researchers and methodology. The information was collected by studying the theoretical and research background, models, findings, patterns presented in internal and external researches about the professional development of Principals, after that notes were taken to identify the codes. In the initial interview with the principals of elementary schools, new codes were identified and analyzed so that they could be gradually saturated with the emergence of more. The process of continuous comparison of concepts and codes continued for the

emergence of central categories. Then, axial coding was done in order to categorize the indicators, in the form of effective components and obstacles, and in the next step, a semi-structured interview form was set, and the in-depth interview (Delphi technique and brainstorming) continued until theoretical saturation with the help of school principals. Finally, the analysis of the current situation of professional development, and with a prospective view of the effective components or drivers of professional development and obstacles, was done by data analysis using the qualitative method, in three stages of open, central and selective coding.

In terms of demographics, among the 20 Principals who were interviewed, in terms of age, 8 people are over 51 years old, 4 people between 46 and 50 years old, 4 people between 41 and 45 years old, 1 person between 36 and 40 years old and 1 There were 31- to 35-year-old and 2 people between 25 to 30 years old. In terms of gender, 9 of them were men and 11 were women; In terms of education level, 9 people had a bachelor's degree, 9 people had a master's degree, and 2 people had a doctorate degree; In terms of academic field relevance, 4 of the Principals have a degree in elementary education, 4 have a degree in educational management, 4 have a degree in educational sciences, 2 have a degree in curriculum planning, 2 have a degree in educational planning, 2 have a degree in educational psychology, and 1 have a degree in Persian literature. And 1 person had a sociology degree.

**Table 1: Demographic information of interviewed school principals**

Interviewee number	gender	Age	Field of Study	Degree level
1	Man	52 years old	Elementary education	bachelor's degree
2	Female	46 years old	Educational Science	bachelor's degree
3	Female	51 years old	Elementary education	bachelor's degree
4	Female	53 years old	Education Management	master's degree
5	Female	49 years old	Education Management	master's degree
6	Man	46 years old	Elementary education	bachelor's degree
7	Female	47 years old	Elementary education	bachelor's degree
8	Man	52 years old	Sociology	master's degree
9	Man	44 years old	Education Management	master's degree
10	Man	40 years old	Curriculum	master's degree
11	Man	55 years old	Educational Psychology	master's degree
12	Man	43 years old	Curriculum	master's degree
13	Man	56 years old	Persian the literature	bachelor's degree
14	Female	50 years old	Curriculum	doctorate degree
15	Female	33 years old	Educational Science	bachelor's degree
16	Female	29 years old	Educational Psychology	master's degree
17	Female	52 years old	Educational Science	bachelor's degree
18	Female	41 years old	Educational Science	bachelor's degree
19	Female	38 years old	Educational Planning	master's degree
20	Man	47 years old	Education Management	doctorate degree

### Research Findings

Data analysis was carried out in 3 stages of examining the current situation, identifying drivers, and identifying obstacles to the professional development of primary school principals.

Main question: At what level do you know the status of your professional development and that of your peers during school management? The researchers reviewed the answers given to this question by reviewing the interviews of the principals of

elementary schools and extracted the following 5 elements:

- Principals become more capable by participating in in-service courses and training workshops.
- Most of the principals were previously teachers or assistants and gained good experience in school management during their teaching and assistantships.
- Principals who are more capable in terms of ethics and establishing human relations are more successful in school management.

- The ability and competence of Principals is effective on the competence of teachers and the learning of students.

- Administrators who are more aware of modern technologies and educational technologies run better quality schools.

Sub-question 1: What are the effective components (drivers) of professional development of elementary school principals?

**Table 2: Open codes, central codes and final codes extracted in the context of the current situation of the professional development of elementary school principals**

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
<p>In front of the challenges facing me, I have a resource to solve the problems. Sometimes in-service courses are held. The more capable school administrators are. To be more up-to-date in terms of knowledge and awareness, he will certainly adopt a management procedure that will improve the performance of teachers and, consequently, students. After being a teacher for 10 years, I was given the position of school management, and I had experiences from interacting with school administrators. The principal's interaction with his colleagues (directors of other schools) and using their experiences and the type of interaction with teachers is very important. Before managing the school, I worked as a deputy for several years and was somewhat familiar with school issues. And my previous experiences during the time of deputy helped me a lot In addition to knowledge and work experience, the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having a source of information</li> <li>- Having a knowledge base</li> <li>- Having a skill base</li> <li>- Providing in-service courses</li> <li>- The effect of the principal's ability on the performance of teachers and students</li> <li>- More knowledgeable administrators effective on the development of teacher and student education</li> <li>- Having a teaching experience and the influence of experiences during the teaching period</li> <li>- The effect of interaction with colleagues and school administrators</li> <li>- The influence of previous experiences in the position of school assistant</li> <li>- Personal and moral competence</li> <li>- Having patience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principals become more capable by participating in in-service courses and training workshops.</li> <li>- Most of the principals were previously teachers or assistants and gained good experience in school management during their teaching and assistantships.</li> <li>- Principals who are more capable in terms of ethics and establishing human relations are more successful in school management.</li> <li>- The ability and competence of Principals is effective on the competence of teachers and the learning of students.</li> <li>- Administrators who are more aware of modern technologies and educational technologies run better quality schools.</li> </ul>

<p>principal is influential in improving the educational process with personal and moral competence.</p> <p>In relation to the parents of the students, one should be very considerate and patient.</p> <p>In my opinion, in addition to professional knowledge, the principal should also be up-to-date in terms of communication and technology use.</p> <p>I think more about the satisfaction of the teachers and the improvement of education in the school. On the other hand, I have to satisfy the students and their parents</p> <p>In school management, I benefit the most from my experience as a teacher and from the experience of my colleagues.</p> <p>School management is a very sensitive and important job. The principal can influence all educational and learning processes with his performance.</p> <p>And the school principal must be up-to-date in this regard and understand the importance of using new technologies and technologies and be skilled in using them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principal's ability to use modern technologies</li> <li>- The importance of teachers' satisfaction</li> <li>- Parents' and students' satisfaction</li> <li>- Teaching experience</li> <li>- Gaining experience from colleagues</li> <li>- The importance and sensitivity of school management</li> <li>- The effect of the principal's temperament on students and teachers</li> <li>- Principal's ability to understand the importance of technology and technology</li> <li>- Trying to equip the school with modern technologies</li> <li>- Having the ability to use a computer</li> </ul>	
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By examining the interviews of the principals of elementary schools, the researchers reviewed the answers given to this question and extracted the following 9 elements:

- To provide a very rich scientific and skill knowledge base for Principals and make it available to them.
- Principals should be chosen based on their merits.
- Oriented ethics and familiarity with psychology

- Holding specialized conferences and seminars for school Principals to exchange experience and learn together
- Creating enough opportunities to enrich Principals' careers through study and research
- Principals should have freedom of action in the school administration.
- Creating a culture for parents' participation in providing school financial resources
- Periodic evaluation of Principals and providing feedback to them to improve the situation

- Using the Internet and social networks for the professional growth of Principals

Sub-question 2: What are the obstacles to the professional development of elementary school principals?

**Table 3: Open codes, core codes and final codes extracted in the context of identifying drivers of professional development of school principals**

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
<p>- It is very good that research is being carried out with this concern. - More knowledgeable and capable administrators have an impact on teachers' performance and students' learning. - In terms of personality, I am constantly learning. I try to read articles related to the characteristics and experiences of successful school principals. - Consider programs or panels for Principals of different regions during the year, and school Principals can talk about school issues and problems without fear of being evaluated. There will be good synergy in these meetings. - Due to the daily routine of schools, we often do not have the possibility to attend those courses. - The term professional development can mean a person who has enough time for growth and development - With the salary we receive, the salary ends in the first few days of the month, and the living conditions in Tehran and the fatigue we take with us from school. I can't think much about raising my professional skills. - In addition to the science of organizational management, he should also know a little bit of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. At least, after taking over the management of the school, he should improve his studies in these fields. Sometimes there is no coordination between the parents' expectations and the</p>	<p>- The importance of research and its effect on the growth of Principals            - The effect of the principal's ability on the performance of teachers and students            - Having a desire to learn and study            - Creating conditions for the exchange of experience            - Having interaction with colleagues and school administrators            - Having interaction with teachers            - Being too busy and not having enough opportunities for career enrichment            - Not having the opportunity            - Financing and welfare of Principals (not having to worry about livelihood)            - The importance of psychology            - Parents' participation in providing financial resources effective on the quality of learning            - Existence of the view of the government in charge of education            - The influence of social networks            - Easy access to information through the Internet            - Flexibility in practice            - Circulars hinder flexibility in practice            - Schools require appropriate management in different conditions and situations</p>	<p>- To provide a very rich scientific and skill knowledge base for Principals and make it available to them.            - Principals should be chosen based on their merits.            - Oriented ethics and familiarity with psychology            - Holding specialized conferences and seminars for school Principals to exchange experience and learn together            - Creating enough opportunities to enrich Principals' careers through study and research            - Principals should have freedom of action in the school administration.            - Creating a culture for parents' participation in providing school financial resources            - Periodic evaluation of Principals and providing feedback to them to improve the situation            - Using the Internet and social networks for the professional growth of Principals</p>



<p>school's financial resources, and the principal requests financial support from the parents. In my opinion, we should use the capabilities of social networks and the Internet. In my opinion, due to the diversity and diversity of people's temperaments, educational systems should be flexible instead of just following the curriculum, and should have the ability to change and diversify the program, when necessary, at different times and according to the conditions of the schools. Most of the time I am busy with logistics and administrative work and I don't have much time to think about personal growth. Because the school is a government school, it is not possible to do much with creativity and innovation. In my opinion, along with in-service training, psychology and social relations courses should also be considered for Principals. Today's world is governed by scientific technologies. As an educational organization, the school must be equipped with new technologies. Students today are different from students 10 years ago. That is, they have different needs. 10 years ago, the use of the Internet was not very widespread. But now all the students use the internet even in the farthest provinces to the capital. The only thing that is not too much concern. Having the ability and skill of the principal. It means that there is no criterion and measurement criteria, it is determined according to the need and necessity and existing relationships between school management people. In my opinion, there should be a field called school management in universities, and researchers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Administrative and daily tasks are time-consuming</li> <li>- The principal must be creative and innovative.</li> <li>- Providing in-service training.</li> <li>- The need to teach psychological courses</li> <li>- The need for technology and technology and the use of the Internet</li> <li>- Today's students require different education and learning than the previous generation. And the need for the Internet and related technology.</li> <li>- Lack of concern about the ability of the principal</li> <li>- Necessity of criteria and criteria for assessment and evaluation of school administrators</li> <li>- The need for researchers to look at school issues</li> <li>- Conducting comparative studies and localization of research results</li> <li>- The importance of social networks</li> <li>- Ability of virtual training in empowering school administrators</li> <li>- It is necessary to have a trustee for the training of school principals</li> <li>- The need to evaluate and evaluate Principals</li> <li>- Ability of virtual training in empowering school administrators</li> </ul>	
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<p>should work only on school management in a comparative manner and examine the experiences of different countries, and the results obtained should be localized and implemented in Iranian schools. In my opinion, the capabilities of social networks and virtual training can be used to increase the capabilities of Principals. That is, the training of educational Principals should have a special trustee and knowledge-enhancing courses should be provided. Finally, by evaluating and measuring, points should be given to Principals. It means that now it is not like in the past that the principal has to leave the school to receive training. It means to receive in-service training while attending school</p>		
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The researchers reviewed the answers given to this question by reviewing the interviews of the principals of elementary schools and extracted the following 3 elements:

- Relationship-oriented in the appointment of Principals regardless of the competence of people
- Centralized management of schools
- Non-participation of parents in providing financial resources

**Table 4: Open codes, central codes and final codes extracted in the field of obstacles to the professional development of elementary school**

<b>Open Coding</b>	<b>Axial Coding</b>	<b>Selective Coding</b>
<p>I don't have much freedom of action during school administration. It means that everything is specified and announced in the form of a circular. A professional school principal should know how to deal with individual teachers, students and their parents in different situations. And on the one hand, because of the centralized system, he has to receive orders from above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compliance with circulars</li> <li>- Centralized management of schools</li> <li>- Inconsistency between parents' expectations and school's financial resources</li> <li>- Centralized and circular system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relationship-oriented in the appointment of Principals regardless of the competence of people</li> <li>-Centralized management of schools</li> <li>- Non-participation of parents in providing financial resources</li> </ul>

**19 ✎ Drivers and Barriers to Professional Development: The Lived Experiences...**

<p>In my opinion, in addition to increasing the professional knowledge of the principal, he should also give some powers to school Principals in terms of freedom of action, so that he can meet the expectations of students and parents in terms of education with the conditions of the school and the school district (Tehran District 3).          Due to the fact that the school is government-run and it is managed by a circular, it is not possible to do much with creativity and innovation.          The school principal should have the freedom and authority to manage the school based on the existing reality and to provide teachers and children with education related to becoming a cosmopolitan citizen. It means to see what happens in education in the world.          It is determined according to the needs and the existing relationships between school management people. And the principal of the school usually does not know how many years he is going to be the principal, he does not think much about developing in the field of management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not having freedom of action and authority</li> <li>- Lack of measurement criteria</li> <li>- Selection of Principals based on relationships</li> <li>- Inattention to the professional competence of Principals</li> </ul>	
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After the descriptive and interpretive analysis of the findings, professional development indicators were presented

in 5 scientific, skill, organizational, personal and cultural-social sectors

**Table 5**  
**: indicators and Selective Coding of professional**  
**deve**  
**lopment**

Selective Coding	indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Administrators who are more aware of modern technologies and educational technologies run better quality schools.</li> <li>- To provide a very rich scientific and skill knowledge base for Principals and make it available to them</li> <li>- Holding specialized conferences and seminars for school Principals to exchange experience and learn together</li> </ul>	scientific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principals become more capable by participating in in-service courses and training workshops.</li> <li>- Most of the principals were previously teachers or assistants and gained good experience in school management during their teaching and assistantships.</li> <li>- The ability and competence of Principals is effective on the competence of teachers and the learning of students.</li> <li>- Using the Internet and social networks for the professional growth of Principals</li> </ul>	Skill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relationship-oriented in the appointment of Principals regardless of the competence of people</li> <li>- Centralized management of schools</li> <li>- Creating enough opportunities to enrich Principals' careers through study and research</li> <li>- Principals should have freedom of action in the school administration.</li> <li>- Periodic evaluation of Principals and providing feedback to them to improve the situation</li> </ul>	organizational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principals who are more capable in terms of ethics and establishing human relations are more successful in school management.</li> <li>- Oriented ethics and familiarity with psychology</li> </ul>	personal

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-participation of parents in providing financial resources</li> <li>- Creating a culture for parents' participation in providing school financial resources</li> </ul>	<p>cultural-social sectors</p>
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**Discussion**

The purpose of the current research was to analyze the lived experience of elementary school principals regarding their professional development and that of their peers, and the findings were collected through interviews and posing three questions. In this section, the components extracted from the answer to each question will be explained.

The components obtained in response to the question "at what level do you know the status of your professional development and that of your peers during school management?" were: Principals become more capable by participating in in-service courses and training workshops; Most of the principals were previously teachers or assistants and gained good experience in school management during their teaching and assistantships; Principals who are more capable in terms of ethics and establishing human relations are more successful in school management; The ability and competence of Principals is effective on the competence of teachers and the learning of students; Administrators who are more aware of modern technologies and educational technologies run better quality schools.

In their speeches, school principals stated that participation in training courses and workshops is effective in the ability of principals. In explaining this finding, we can refer to the researches of Desimon (2009), Taheri et al. They also came to the conclusion in

their research that formal and informal training and workshops have an effect on the professional growth and development of educational Principals.

The research findings of Farahbakhsh et al. (2016) and Safi (2013) in explaining the component of school principals' experiences during their teaching and deputy tenure and its effect on improving the performance of educational principals are in line with the findings of the current research and have emphasized the effect of the previous experiences of school principals.

One of the components that the principals pointed out and emphasized in most of the interviews was the good nature and establishment of good human relations of the principals, which in various researches, such as Azahband (2011); Farahbakhsh et al. (2016); Asghari, Abdullahi, Kishori, Jalalund (2017); Reston (2015); Paul Close and Ann Kendrick (2018); Sally (2011) has mentioned the importance of this component.

In explaining that the ability and competence of Principals is effective on the competence of teachers and the learning of students, we can refer to the findings of the researches of Bolem (1993), Nasiri Velikbani, Qanbari and Sarchehani (2015), Tatari Blahsur, Hosseinpour (2016), Barakman et al. (2020) and Arasteh., Hasanpour, Izadi, Bostani (2014) cited.

In the aforementioned studies and many other studies, the importance of

the performance of school administrators and its effect on the professional growth of teachers and the improvement of students' learning have been mentioned. Many administrators have pointed to their and their peers' awareness of modern technologies and educational technologies and their relationship with higher quality management of schools, and in explaining this finding, we can refer to the research of Gomes et al. (2020), Brabham (2017), Clifford and Ross (2015), Ghasemian Dastjardi et al. Cited.

The components obtained in response to the question "What are the effective components (drivers) of the professional development of primary school principals?" They were: providing a very rich knowledge base in terms of science and skill for Principals and making it available to them; The selection of Principals is based on their merits; Principals should be ethical and familiar with psychology; Organizing specialized conferences and seminars for school Principals to exchange experience and learn together; Creating sufficient opportunities to enrich Principals' careers through study and research; Administrators should have freedom of action in the school administration; Creating a culture for parents' participation in providing school financial resources; periodic evaluation of Principals and providing feedback to them to improve the situation; Using the Internet and social networks for the professional growth of Principals.

In explaining the first extracted component that there is a very rich scientific and skill knowledge base for Principals, we can refer to the researches of Liliogerd et al. (2020),

Brockman et al. (2020), Richter et al. , (Ganser, 2000), Jafarirad et al. (2021), Najafi, Ghahrani, Abul Qasimi and Arefi (2018), Jahdi Mustali Baglo (2017), Azahband (2012) pointed out the importance of in-service training and presentation Training and skills for school administrators and its importance have been emphasized a lot.

Regarding the component of appointing principals based on their merits, according to the speeches of school principals and the examination of the principals' educational and work background, it was found that most principals did not have specialized education related to school management, and their merits and capabilities were not measured before appointing them to school management. Therefore, this issue has a great impact on the performance of school principals, the importance of this issue has been pointed out in many researches, including the research of Rostami and Yousefi (2019), Rahimi, Koroneh, Ahanchian (2019), Abdollahi, (2013). It is worth mentioning that this issue has been raised in internal researches.

In the interview of the principals, the importance of having a positive attitude, empathizing with parents, students, and teachers, and having psychological and ethical knowledge of school principals was emphasized. In the review of the background of the research, it was found that in many studies, including Paul Close and Ann Kendrick (2018), Reston (2015), Sali (2011), Azahband (2011), Asghari, Abdullahi, Kishori, Jalalund (2017), Farahbakhsh et al. (2016), Asadi Chegini (2017) have pointed out the importance of this issue.

About the importance of holding specialized conferences and seminars for school principals, many materials

were observed both in interviews and in internal and external research, including in the research of Maki and Garcia (2016), (Campana, 2014), (Ganser, 2000), Esfahani and Esfahani (2017), Hayat, Abdulahi, Zainabadi and Arasteh (2014) the importance of this issue in the growth and development of Principals has been mentioned.

Regarding the creation of sufficient opportunities to enrich Principals' careers through study and research, as in the research of Jafari et al. (2017), Jahdi Mostali Baglo (2016), Farhadi and Sadeghi (2015), this issue was also mentioned. Most of the administrators complained about the time-consuming and time-consuming daily activities in schools and expressed that they do not have time for research and education activities.

Most of the administrators stated that they do not have freedom of action in the school administration and this issue deprives them of creativity and initiative. About the importance of this issue and its effect on the management process of Principals, Jafari-Rad et al. (2021) and Jafari-Rad (2019) have discussed in their research.

One of the issues that have formed in the educational culture of Iranians is that the government is in charge of providing free education for all members of the society, for this reason many parents do not participate and cooperate in providing school financial resources, on the other hand, the budget allocated by the government for the administration of schools is not enough to provide quality educational services. In their speeches, most of the principals mentioned that in the field of culture, parents should be involved in providing financial resources for the school. Sahlin (2019), McCracken (2017), Reston (2015),

Naiker and Naidu (2014), Militelo et al. (2013), Jafarirad et al.), Jahdi Mostali Baglo (2016) have mentioned in his research about participatory management and the effect of participatory culture on improving the situation.

In many interviews, it was pointed out that there are no criteria and standards for the evaluation of school principals, considering that the evaluation and measurement of each feature helps to improve it, the performance evaluation criterion should be considered for school principals and by evaluating and providing points and the rating to the school administrators encouraged them in correcting the deficiencies and strengthening the right characteristics. Therefore, periodic evaluation of Principals and giving feedback to them will be effective to improve the situation, in the researches of Reston (2015), Hosseini, Ghorchian and Nader Qoli (2014), Hadian Niasri (2019), Rostami and Yousefi (2018), Tarhani, Abdulahi, Zainabadi. and Abbasian (2018), Tatari Blahsur, Hosseinpour (2016), Nasiri Valikbani, Qanbari and Sarchehani (2015) emphasized the importance of this issue.

In today's world, social networks and the use of the Internet have become an integral part of life, and with the facilitation it has created in communication, all organizations, including educational organizations, benefit from its benefits; Considering that the Principals mentioned in the interviews that they did not have enough opportunities to participate in the courses, using the Internet and social networks can help the Principals to receive online training in various researches, including Fancera (2020), Esfahani, Soleimani, Torani and Sabahi

(2019), Esfahani and Esfahani (2018), Hayat, Abdulahi, Zainabadi and Arasteh (2015), Vakili (2023) have mentioned the effect and efficiency of the Internet and online training in the professional development of Principals.

The components obtained in response to the question "What are the obstacles to the professional development of primary school principals?" They were: relationship-oriented in the appointment of Principals without regard to the competence of individuals; centralized management of schools; non-participation of parents in providing financial resources.

Regarding the component of appointing Principals based on relationships, in the examination of the academic and work background of the Principals and from the conversations of some Principals, it was found that there is no specific criterion and standard for the appointment of school Principals, and in most cases, the Principals had the experience of being a teacher or a school deputy, while in many researches, it was pointed out that schools, like many social organizations, need Principals who have managerial skills.

And they should have management knowledge and their appointment should be based on standards and criteria. The researches of Kraft (2001), Richter et al. These are the findings.

The researches of Kraft (2001), Richter et al. These are the findings.

In Iran, most educational institutions are state-owned and run in a centralized manner, while the centralized system has a number of advantages, it also has disadvantages. The school principals mentioned in the interviews that all issues are communicated to them in the form of circulars and they are forced to

follow them regardless of the conditions and situation of the school, and in two internal researches by Jafari Rad et al. (2014) and Jafari Rad (2018) has been

Regarding the issue of parents' non-participation in school finances (its advantages were pointed out in the drivers section), it requires culture building and changing the attitude of the society and in many researches, including Sahlin (2019), McCracken (2017), Reston (2015), Naiker and Naidu (2014), Militalo et al. (2013), Jafarirad et al. (2019), Jafarirad (2018), Asghari, Abdullahi, Kishori, Jalalund (2017), Jahdi Mustali Beglu (2016) referred to participatory management and parental cooperation. Is.

Based on the findings of the research, it was found that educational organizations, although they are similar to other social organizations in terms of general principles and management methods, but educational organizations have special characteristics, so their management is different from other social organizations. Therefore, for the efficiency of education, educational reforms at the levels of qualified educational Principals are necessary.

Therefore, other researchers are suggested to conduct basic and applied research by examining the characteristics of educational organizations and their similarities and differences with other organizations to improve their management. In the implementation of the research, it was a little difficult to get the satisfaction of the principals and convince them to conduct an interview to assure the principals that the information provided would be preserved. Principals of schools were interviewed, if teachers and parents of students were also



interviewed. More and possibly more varied data would have been obtained.

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