



A Comparative Study of the Policies of School Principal Appointment in Switzerland, Finland, Singapore, and South Korea: Lessons for Iran

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 08 July 2022 Revised: 16 December 2022 Accepted: 18 January 2023 Online: 18 August 2023</p>	<p>In the past decade, the professionalism of school management and attention to the quality of the performance of school principals has been at the top of the educational policies agenda. The purpose of this study was to examine the policies for appointing school principals in countries with successful educational systems. The research is conducted using a qualitative comparative method based on George Bereday's approach at the macro analysis level (country) and the strategy of selecting countries was "differences in social systems and similarities in the output of the educational systems." John Stuart Mill's differences and similarities approach was used to analyze the data. The findings of the research showed that the policies of appointing school principals in the selected countries are similar in three cases: the necessity of having teaching experience, management experience, and an entrance exam for candidates for school management positions. The findings also showed that the policies of appointing managers in the selected countries are different from each other in four cases. While in Switzerland and Finland, a master's degree in educational administration, participation in in-service training courses and obtaining a teaching competency certificate are important; in Singapore and South Korea, the emphasis is on the presentation of projects on the goals and strategic plans of schools. According to the research findings, it is suggested that the policies of appointing school principals in Iran be rewritten based on the school principal appointment policies of Singapore and South Korea.</p>
<p>KEY WORDS</p> <p>Appointment Policies In-service Training School Leadership School Principals</p>	

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1. Introduction

School principals are the roots of the strong tree of the educational system who bring life to schools by supplying water and feeding the stems and leaves. According to Alaqeband (2019) school principals direct the activities of educational organizations such as education and learning. They are the link between teachers, students, parents, and society, and they contribute to the progress of students by influencing the organization of the school, especially teachers and teaching (OECD, 2022). Their conduct affects the collective efficacy of teachers (Çoğaltay & Boz, 2022) and it is the main factor in promoting teachers' professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2022). They also affect the success of students in cognitive and non-cognitive fields and they are considered the second most effective factor in the quality of students' performance (Agasisti, Bowers & Soncin, 2018; Bani Asad, Qolizadeh & Amin Khandaghi, 2017; Bush, 2016). Scholars such as Hallinger and Murphy believe that sustainable school improvement is rarely achieved without the existence of active and skilled principals (Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal & Dozier, 2016). Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube (2015: 6) also stated: "No nation progresses beyond the quality of its educational manager and leader." Therefore, the effectiveness of principals depends on their ability to improve the effectiveness of schools and the improvement of academic and non-academic results of students (Boyce & Bowers, 2018), and emphasizing the training of effective school leaders is a key element in educational reforms (Schleicher, 2012). In this regard, in agreement with Bush (2018), any effort to change the quality of the educational system should start with school principals.

Research on a wide range of issues related to school management has attracted the attention of international circles (Flessa, Bramwell, Fernandez & Weinstein 2018). One of these subjects is the policy of appointing school principals. These policies are important since they reflect the scope of activities, duties, and roles of school principals. In Iran, the appointment of school principals is based on the "Regulation on the Selection and Appointment of School Principals", approved in 2021. This regulation, which was compiled in 9 articles, is based on the principles of "the rule of law, justice-orientation, responsibility, and accountability" and the necessity of establishing the necessary mechanisms for reforming methods, trends, processes, and institutionalizing meritocracy and expertise-orientation in the selection, appointment, and retention of capable and qualified principals, based on the Document of Fundamental Transformation of Education and Leadership and Management Subsystems. According to this regulation, candidates for management or deputy principal positions must have general, specialized, and professional qualifications.

General qualifications mean having religious, moral, and behavioral qualifications; being married; possessing personality traits such as good nature, the spirit of participation, the ability to

interact constructively with others, popularity, acceptability, and good reputation among colleagues and excelling in characteristics such as legalism, belief in God, piety and social revolutionary commitment; complete mental health and physical ability to perform duties. Professional qualifications include field and degree of education, years of service, and type of employment. Therefore, it is necessary to have at least a master's degree related to management and 8 years of service experience. Professional qualifications include ethics and professional knowledge, abilities, and skills. In order to implement this regulation at the level of regional education departments, the "Committee for the Selection and Appointment of School Principals" has been formed to review and approve the qualifications of candidates (Supreme Council of Education, 2021).

Research on the "regulations for the appointment of school principals" in the last two decades shows that these regulations do not reflect the importance and complexity of schools as a unit of analysis; rather, it defines the duties of school principals as people who monitor the activities of school members and represent education, not agents or decision-makers; and instead of emphasizing on teaching experience, it emphasizes only on service record, and despite the five decades of activity of Educational Sciences Faculties in training specialists at different levels of education, educational administration expertise has no effect on the appointment procedures of school management, and there is no requirement to participate in in-service training courses or acquiring competencies for school principals (Adli, Mehran & Akbari, 2017; Zarei, 2012). These gaps in the policies of appointing school principals in Iran, and the lack of successful principals in many schools (Mard, Zainabadi & Arasteh, 2016) have drawn our attention to the policies of appointing school principals in the educational systems of other countries. However, according to Assis and Marconi (2021: 881), even though school administration is one of the main factors to ensure an effective educational environment, there are very few studies on appointment policies and factors that determine the success of school principals. Also, in the existing literature, there is no mention of the difference in the policies of appointing school principals in different academic periods (Adli et al. 2017).

Some of the research about the policies for appointing school principals is as follows: Medford & Brown (2022), in their study, challenged the way new principals of high schools are appointed. In this method, candidates receive no training and they apply for the position based on the principle of promotion due to the increased years of service. According to the findings, it is suggested that the formulation of new policies for the appointment of school principals be based on professional development, congruence between school culture and background, and the ability and commitment of school principals. Assis and Marconi (2021) studied the potential impact of principal selection

policies on teachers' perception of management. The findings showed a significant difference between the principals who are selected through the "selection and designation process" and the ones who are simply "appointed" as such.

Also, in the process of selecting school principals, it is important to take the local context into consideration in order to choose professionals. Sağlam, Geçer & Bağ, (2017), compared the processes of appointing school principals in developed countries (England, America, France, and Finland) with developing countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland, and Hungary). The findings showed that there are discrepancies between the studied countries in terms of the processes of education and the appointment of school principals. Developed countries, except for France, have pre-service training programs for volunteers, which is a prerequisite for the appointment of school principals. In France, two years of in-service training is a requirement for school principals. A master's degree in educational administration is also a prerequisite.

In developing countries, no pre-service education is required, and successive political interventions often lead to conflicts in schools. The findings of the research by Adli et al. (2017) showed that the regulations for the appointment of school principals in Iran only refers to the years of service; while in countries with a successful education system, teaching experience is of paramount importance. The research findings of Olayiwola (2015) showed that the continuous poor academic performance of high school students in Nigeria is caused by the quality of school leadership. School principals in Nigeria are appointed as principals without a regular procedure or program. Therefore, a model was presented for the appointment of school principals in Nigeria based on the findings. Mampane (2015) examined the procedures for appointing school principals using a qualitative method in her research. The findings showed incomplete implementation of the established processes, power play among different stakeholders, and unfair procedures in the process of appointing principals. This led to teachers' negative attitudes, resistance, and non-cooperation. Currently, training courses are not required for the appointment of a principal since there is still an unwritten assumption that good teachers can be effective principals. Based on the findings, the appointment criteria should be revised and they should include higher education and professional qualifications. It is also necessary to develop a monitoring tool to ensure the quality of appointing school principals.

The findings of Piriai and Niknami's research (2016) showed that there is a huge difference between the existing criteria for the appointment and promotion of school principals and the desired criteria from the viewpoint of teachers and principals. These criteria are rarely implemented in practice which has led to the dissatisfaction of teachers and the inefficiency of the

education system. The findings of Ghasemi Aghdami's research (2014) showed that the policies of appointing school principals in Iran's educational system disregard teaching experience and lack intervention and supervision of the principals' working process. Also, a degree in the field of educational administration is not a necessity, and managers do not receive training before assuming responsibility. The findings of Zarei's research (2012) showed that the criteria for the appointment of principals include general things such as good background, following Islamic ethics, leadership, management power and the ability to have good relationships with others, being married, and not having a criminal or political record. Siavashi Zangiani (2011), after reviewing the resolutions of the Supreme Council of Education, stated that the policies for appointing school principals have not been revised in the past two decades. The findings of Hosseinzadeh Thakhtkeshha's research (2011) showed that about 4% of the country's school principals are graduates of the field of Educational Administration, and this position is assigned to candidates without completing a training course. However, teachers believe that principals with an educational degree perform better than principals with educational degrees in unrelated fields. Although these researches support the importance of the regulations for the appointment of school principals, so far, no research has been done on the regulations for the selection and appointment of school principals approved in 2022. Therefore, the main goal of this research was to examine the policies for appointing school principals in countries with successful educational systems including Switzerland, Finland, Singapore, and South Korea. The sub-goals of this research include:

- Identifying the similarities of the selected countries in terms of the policies for appointing school principals
- Identifying the differences between the selected countries in terms of the policies for appointing school principals

2. Research Method

The present research is non-experimental, applied, and comparative in terms of its nature, purpose, and qualitative method, and it was conducted using George Bereday's four-step approach. The research population comprised countries with a successful educational system, which was selected by purposeful sampling, including Switzerland, Finland, Singapore, and South Korea. Selecting countries as the unit of analysis is a useful tool for collecting data at the macro level. The strategy of selecting countries was based on differences between social systems and similarities in educational system outputs (Madandar Arani and Kakia, 2018). Difference in social systems means

dissimilarities between social systems in terms of culture, religion, politics, economy, etc. in the selected countries; while the educational output (the process of school principal appointment) in these countries is similar. Once the countries were selected, appointment policies, school management, etc. were identified in reliable and related databases such as OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, and ERIC using the keywords: Boolean method. The documents available on the websites of the Ministry of Education of the selected countries were also studied. In Iran, the Irandoc website, the portal of Humanities and Cultural Studies, and other scientific databases were chosen. John Stuart Mill's differences and similarities approach was used for analyzing the data and presenting the results.

3. Findings

The findings are reported based on George Bereday's four-step approach (Adick, 2017).

A) Description

At this stage, the structure of the educational system, the course of study, and how school principals in the following four countries are selected and appointed will be described.

Switzerland: The Swiss educational system is one of the most diverse educational systems in the world; it is managed by a state or a cantonal structure without having a central structure or ministry of education. Based on the size of the cantons, there are between 20 and more than 400 schools in each canton. The canton is the legislative branch of the Swiss parliament and has 5 to 9 members elected by voting. The cantons are responsible for the educational system; they determine school rules and form the political body of the educational system. However, the number of state laws related to education is very limited and they are mostly about professional education. According to the constitution of 1874, the cantons are obliged to provide adequate supplies and facilities for education. Most Swiss children start their education with kindergarten at the age of 5 or 6; however, it is not compulsory and it is offered with the aim of teaching social skills and getting accustomed to attending the classroom. Primary school begins at the age of 7; it is compulsory and lasts 8 to 9 years. High school courses are very diverse given the subjects that they offer; the courses include math and science, modern languages, Ancient languages, economy, art, and sports. High school lasts between 4.5 and 6.5 years. Different institutions play their part at different levels of school administration in Switzerland (Ärlestig, Day & Johansson 2016). At the state level, schools

are governed by cantonal assemblies, which have educational powers with varying forms of management for different types of schools. In some cantons, the municipal administration manages the school at the intermediate level. The official responsibility for decision-making on school matters rests with the school council, or the school committee whose members are experts in the fields of pedagogy, personnel affairs, and management, and they are elected by registered voters of the local community (Wagner, Santiago, Thieme, Zay, 2004, p. 23).

Finland: The structure of the educational system in Finland is decentralized and decisions are made independently at the local level (OECD, 2013, p. 14). Pre-school education is provided to children aged 1 to 6 with the support of the municipality. From the age of 7 to 16, all Finnish citizens are required to complete a 10-year primary education course. Local authorities and schools are free to decide on the curriculum. The leadership of the school is mainly delegated to the principals and vice-principals of the schools and it is considered part of the authority of the local government and city management. Principals and vice principals are employed by local education authorities. Personnel and financial affairs are managed differently in different units and are often independent of school activities. School principals in Finland are selected from experienced teachers or university graduates (Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Singapore: The country has a centralized education system structure, and the Ministry has direct control over all schools. Nevertheless, each school is run quite uniquely. Nurseries are not compulsory for infants up to four years old, and kindergarten is optional for five and six-year-old children. However, primary schools, as well as secondary schools, are compulsory for all citizens of Singapore for 6 years each (Ministry of Education, 2022). There are three career paths in Singapore's educational system for individuals: the teaching path, the senior specialist path, and the leadership path. The school and ministry leadership path leads the candidates to the pinnacle of the profession. Teachers who demonstrate their ability to assume leadership responsibilities can expect to obtain this position (Lim, 2006, p. 5).

South Korea: The structure of the South Korean educational system is completely centralized, and the decision-making authority of school principals is very limited. Of course, the principal of each school decides the goals of her/his school. South Korea's educational system is 3-3-6, which means there are 6 years of primary school, 3 years of first high school, and 3 years of second high school; high schools are also divided into two groups: general and vocational. The Ministry of

Education and Human Resources Management, as well as educational districts, are responsible for the selection of school staff and financial managers. Since 2001, school-based accounting has been implemented to organize financial resources and expenditures based on school priorities to strengthen financial independence at the school level. The school curriculum is determined and produced at the national level, and the school principal organizes the curriculum in the defined territory. In recent years, in order to strengthen democracy, the participation of teachers and parents in matters such as school management, teacher professional development and building strong links with the local community, financial management activities, staff affairs, and curriculum at the school level has increased. A school council consisting of teachers, parents, and the local community is formed to look into general aspects of school administration. The principal, the vice principal, and the head teacher are middle-level supervisors who provide leadership at the school level. Candidates for the position of school management can qualify for this position by promotion or invitation (Ministry of Education, 2007b).

B) Interpretation

In the second stage, the data on the educational system of each country are interpreted in the historical, political, social, and economic context.

Switzerland: Switzerland is a federal country with three political levels: confederation, cantons or provinces, and communes (regional divisions within provinces). Currently, there are 26 local governments or cantons that have delegated part of their sovereignty to the federal government. Economically, Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world and has the most stable economy based on the free market. Accordingly, the educational system is fully funded and the per capita cost of each student is \$24,848. In the past, Switzerland's culture was influenced by its neighbors, but in recent years it has grown into something distinctive. The country has a rich cultural diversity, especially with four official and religious languages and different official holidays and celebrations in each canton (OECD, 2022).

Finland: The country has a republican political system based on parliament with a powerful single-party system. The economy of this country is based on the market with a huge dependence on exports. One of the achievements of the Finnish government in the last decade was the eradication of poverty; therefore, the people of this country live in financial prosperity. The per

capita cost of each student is \$18,170. Swedish culture, which emphasizes the role of the educational system in social development with its central value, equality and justice, has influenced the culture of this country (Clausnitzer, 2021). Finland is among the countries that have been able to create and maintain a successful educational system during the last three decades. One of the responsibilities of the school principal is to monitor teachers' performance (Colagrossi, 2018).

Singapore: Singapore is governed by a one-party parliamentary republic in the form of a centralized government. It has led to the formation of a centralized and small but strong educational system (Dimmock, 2012). Singapore has one of the most successful market-oriented economies based on maritime trade. Therefore, the per capita cost of each student is \$21,500. Given the fact that Singapore was first a British and then a Japanese colony, it has a combination of European and Asian cultures. Meritocracy is a defining core value in this culture (Ho, 2003), and excelling in studies and being the top student in school as a result of succeeding in exams is a reflection of this culture. A strong, single-party central government exerts a high degree of control over education; therefore, seniority and meritocracy affect the selection process of school principals. Singapore's educational system has experienced continuous success in international examinations in the last two decades (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

South Korea: South Korea was under the control of Japan until the Second World War and has experienced different periods from authoritarian and democratic governments to the current liberal democracy. Since its establishment, South Korea has witnessed vast advances in education, economy, and, culture, and since the 1960s, the country has developed from one of the poorest countries in Asia to one of the richest in the world. This country has expanded dramatically in the field of education, especially at the level of higher education. The culture of this country is a combination of traditional Korean and Chinese cultures (Sutton, 2011).

C) Juxtaposition

In this stage, the data related to the selection procedures of school principals in the selected countries are reviewed. The main point of this study was to reflect on the type of government and its management method in school administration. Switzerland is one of the most democratic educational systems in the world. Therefore, there is a variety of policies for appointing school principals in cantons. A relatively common situation in the cantons is that the school council

appoints the members of the leadership team and the school principal from amongst experienced teachers. Also, a master's degree in educational administration and a certificate of teaching qualifications are required to qualify for the school management position. Most pedagogic powers such as teacher recruitment, teacher evaluation, school annual planning, school development, community relations, cooperation with parents, and school quality improvement are delegated to the principal and school leadership team. The members of the School leadership team are responsible for school projects and school quality improvement (Huber, 2011, p. 3).

There are two paths in appointing a school principal in Finland: the first path is choosing a teacher-principal, which means that the principal is recruited from among experienced teachers who qualify for the management position based on the type of school and teaching experience; a master's degree in educational administration, a certificate of teaching competence, and a certificate in educational administration are required. The educational administration certificate is offered by the Finnish National Board of Education or obtained through university study in the field of educational administration. There are no national regulations for school leadership training courses and it is part of the responsibilities of the city administration. Financial management and pedagogy skills training courses are important for school principals. The subject area of the educational administration certificate includes the basics of public law, public and urban management, educational administration human resource management, and financial management. These qualifications are assessed by two written exams. The first part of the exam includes the basics of public law, public and urban management, and the second part includes educational administration human resource management, and financial management (OECD, 2013). The second path consists of assuming the position of school principal by obtaining a university degree in the field of Educational Leadership. The study of educational leadership in the university covers the subject area discussed, and other skills of the school principal are acquired through research, interviewing, and coaching. Academic courses provide participants with professional development, and participants choose their final project based on management perspectives and tools necessary for school evolution. The people who choose this path, receive continuous training. Of course, they pay for the courses themselves. In addition, some universities offer school leadership training courses with government funding, which gives them a lower score. Also, to provide a comprehensive leadership perspective for today's schools, some local and private organizations offer training courses that are in high demand. In recent years, the pre-service training course for school leadership has increased to promote teachers to school principals (National Board of Education of Finland, 2012).

In Singapore, as in all systems with a hierarchical structure, candidates for the position of school management start as a teacher and, in order, take on the subject head teacher, head of the unit, vice president, school principal, and finally the minister of education. Accordingly, experienced teachers with a successful teaching background become head teachers or heads of the unit first, and if they show leadership potential, they can participate in the exam of the school vice-principal or principal. Knowledge of school leadership is evaluated through management and teaching tasks. Since 2001, the National Institute of Education has designed a six-month skills training program for volunteers to prepare them for school leadership. The National Institute of Education and the Ministry jointly provide a professional development platform to prepare educational leaders for the challenges and demands of the changing systems. Therefore, the school's leadership skills training program is far-sighted and emphasizes leadership capacities in a complex and dynamic context. Also, learning processes are carried out in real school environments and the overseas learning programs are designed for managers who have 4 years of experience. The topics offered in this course include leadership, strategic planning and management, staff management, student management and, resource management (Lim, 2006).

In South Korea, school principals are hired by promotion. This path is a vertical promotion system for the candidate, starting with being a teacher, then moving on to becoming the monitor or head teacher, and finally leading to being the school principal. There is fierce competition among teachers for the management post. Therefore, teachers must have at least 25 years of professional teaching experience to be able to volunteer for this post. Considering that the age of entry into the teaching profession is about 25 years, the candidate will be promoted to the position of school principal at the age of 50. In addition to teaching experience, the candidate is required to have a management certificate. Therefore, candidates with service experience (90 points), skill training (30 points), and performance (80 points) can apply for this post and go through the steps. In the first stage, the qualified candidate is selected based on the required documents. Heads of national universities or regional educational supervisors record the total marks and prepare a list of candidates on January 31 of each year. In the second stage, the staff affairs committee studies the requests and examines the candidate's physical and mental conditions. In the third stage, the volunteer prepares and presents her/his plan for running the school. The candidates' proposed programs for school management reflect how they manage the school as principals, and they also include their introduction, their philosophy of education, their dreams and vision for the school, the story of their successes in the educational system, and their desire to reform the educational system and real strategies for implementation. The committee also interviews the candidate at this stage.

After reviewing the school management program, the head of education refers the candidate to the ministry to be appointed as the school principal. The hiring of the school principal is also done by invitation. This method was designed in August 1996, in search of suitable local volunteers. In this way, candidates with a management certificate and teaching experience in the relevant area submit their applications for school management. In the second step, the head of the local education department reviews the application according to the quality of teaching, parents' opinions, and recommendation letters. The third step is officially inviting the candidate by the ministry or district educational supervisor to provide a copy of the documents that show their qualifications, school management plan, health report, and other documents. In the fourth step, the school council recommends the candidate for the school management position twice. In both times, the result is reported to the ministry or the district educational supervisor. In the fifth stage, one person is chosen to manage the school and is proposed to the Minister of Education. This way of selecting a school principal is very important, and for this reason, the candidate who goes through this path is appointed to this position for 8 years (Ministry of Education, 2007).

D) Comparison

The results of the data analysis show the existence of similarities and differences in the selected countries (Table 1). The first similarity in the countries of Switzerland, Finland, Singapore, and South Korea is the importance of teaching experience for securing a school management position: in Switzerland 10 years, Finland 11 years, Singapore 15 years, and in South Korea 25 years of teaching experience is reported. Teaching experience is considered an important principle for the school management position, despite the difference in its length of time. The second point of similarity is the necessity of management experience: in Switzerland, 10 years, Finland 17 years, Singapore 8 years and South Korea 3 years of management experience are required (OECD, 2021). Although its duration is different in the selected countries, it is a necessary condition for obtaining the school principal position. The third similarity is the type of candidates entering this post. Despite the difference in the type of exams - written, interview, or both types - there is some type of entrance exam in all selected countries.

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences among the selected countries for school management positions. It seems that the structure of the educational system in the selected countries is the main factor in creating these differences. In this study, Switzerland is on one side of the spectrum and South Korea is on the other, and the two countries are significantly different in

terms of the structure of their educational system. The structure of the educational system of Switzerland and Finland is decentralized, while the structure of the education system of Singapore and South Korea is centralized. Due to this fact, the first difference is related to the candidate's educational qualifications. Even though in all selected countries a master's degree is necessary, in Switzerland and Finland, only a master's degree in Educational Administration and Leadership is acceptable. The second difference is attention to in-service training courses. In Switzerland and Finland, school management training courses are continuously offered to volunteers and school administrators. The third difference is related to the presentation of a teaching competency certificate for the position of the school principal, which is one of the main appointment criteria in Switzerland and Finland. The fourth difference is the presentation of a project about the school's goals. In Singapore and South Korea, candidates for the school management position must present their goals and plans to the general administration; in contrast, in Switzerland and Finland, this criterion is non-existent.

Table 1. Similarities and Differences in the Policies of School Principal Appointment in the Selected Countries

Criterion	Teaching Experience	Management Experience	Entry by Examination	Master's Degree in Educational Administration	in-service Training	Teaching Competency Certificate	Project Presentation about School Goals
Country							
Switzerland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Finland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Singapore	✓	✓	✓				✓
South Korea	✓	✓	✓				✓

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this comparative research was to show the policies of appointing school principals in Switzerland, Finland, Singapore, and South Korea in order to provide lessons for the policymakers of the Iranian educational system. The findings of this research show that the policies of appointing school principals in the selected countries are similar in three cases: the necessity of teaching experience, management experience, and entry by exam. Research findings of Assis & Marconi (2021), Adli et al. (2017), Ghasemi Aghdami (2014) and Sağlam et al. (2017) have emphasized the necessity of these criteria. The findings of this research also showed that the policies for appointing school principals in the selected countries are different in four cases. The criteria for a master's degree in Educational Administration, participation in in-service training

courses, and obtaining a teaching competency certificate are three common features in Switzerland and Finland. The research findings of Hosseinzadeh Takhtaksheha (2011), Medford & Brown (2022), Piriai and Niknami (2016) and Sağlam et al. (2017) have supported these criteria in the appointment of school principals. These criteria do not exist in the policies of appointing managers in Singapore and South Korea. In contrast, in Singapore and South Korea, the emphasis is on the presentation of a project about the goals of the school and vision development; something that is not seen in the policies of appointing school principals in Switzerland and Finland.

The policies of appointing school principals in the selected countries with two different administrative structures have important implications for Iran's educational system. Studies have shown that the policies of appointing school principals are a reflection of the socio-political structures of countries (Olayiwola, 2015; Sağlam et al., 2017). Therefore, in developing countries, government ownership is very high in these structures. School principals are the representative and executive arms of the policies of the Ministry of Education. This is different from what is discussed in the school management literature, and school management is not the focus of the study and analysis of these educational systems. On the other hand, the ineffectiveness of the educational system is often linked to its centralized structure. However, the study of the selected countries in this research showed that the effectiveness of the educational system is beyond the centralized and decentralized structure. Even though decentralization is a necessary choice and an important change in the educational system that has an important impact on individual and social dimensions, the success of the education system depends on the delegation of authority to managers and the recognition of the school as an independent unit; as the experience of Singapore and South Korea show, a centralized education system can be very successful.

Despite the important role of school principals in improving the performance and outcomes of students and teachers, the complexity of school management has not been considered in the current criteria for appointing school principals in Iran. As the research findings of Hosseinzadeh Takhtaksheha (2011), Ghasemi Aghdami (2014), Piriai & Niknami (2016), Zarei (2012) and Siavoshi Zangiani (2011) shows there is no criterion for teaching experience in the policies of appointing principals and the candidate for this post must simply be an employee of the Ministry of Education. Also, the criteria of a degree in Educational Administration and participation in in-service training courses have not been seen in the policies for appointing school principals. Based on these findings, it is suggested that the policymakers of Iran's education system consider the following:

- The school should be recognized as an independent organizational unit and the school principals should make decisions about school affairs and be responsible for the school's performance.
- Teaching experience should be a criterion for the position of school principal.
- Studying the field of Educational Administration and skill training courses in educational management should be necessary to qualify for the position of school principal.

The findings of this research will help educational policy makers to formulate policies for the appointment of school principals according to the experience of countries with successful educational systems.

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