

Comparison of Educational Domains of Public and Non-Public Primary School Principals in Karaj County

Corresponding Author:

Soraya Darvani Dire, *M.A. in Educational Sciences, Faculty of Islamic Education, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran*

Received: 11-May-2026, Accepted: 26-May-2026, Online First: 27-May-2026

ABSTRACT:

The present study aimed to compare the educational domains of public and non-public primary school principals in Karaj County during the academic year 2023–2024. The research method was descriptive and causal-comparative. The statistical population of this study included all primary school principals in Karaj city (according to the Education Organization's report, the total number of primary school principals in Karaj city was 900) in the academic year 2023–2024. For sample selection, using Morgan's table, 240 principals were selected, of whom 60 principals were equally chosen, including 30 from public schools and 30 from non-public schools, based on cluster random sampling. The results, using inferential statistics and analysis of variance tests, showed a significant difference between the educational domains of public and non-public school principals. Therefore, the results of the present study can be considered by principals and educational officials of the Ministry of Education.

Keywords: Educational domains, Public schools, Non-public schools, Karaj County

INTRODUCTION:

Education includes behavioral, social, cognitive, and emotional abilities. Doyle (2013), in defining education, considers it the active enhancement of social development across four categories: self-control and behavior management; self-awareness and stability (self-confidence); social skills; and learning skills. Considering the importance and understanding that if education is properly implemented, correct instruction will occur and learning will take place appropriately, the principal must be able to develop a human being in all educational dimensions; a human who thinks globally and acts nationally and locally; pays attention to the ideas of others; is free from prejudice and considers prejudice an obstacle to reasoning; is participatory and community-oriented; considers knowledge and science to belong to all humanity; is inquisitive and has critical thinking and approaches issues rationally. In addition to problem-solving, such a person also tries to formulate problems; considers the essence of existence to be based on change and transformation; is not afraid of innovation; considers everything the result of education and education as a continuous, progressive, and developmental process; believes in lifelong learning; considers themselves useful and valuable; and has self-esteem (Ahmadabadi, Arasteh, Abdulrahim, & Abbasian, 2021).

Today, education is one of the serious gaps in the education system. Excessive attention by schools and administrators to instruction has led to neglect of its main component: education. Qasemi (2020) stated that, in various societies, including Iran, we are currently

witnessing an educational and moral crisis. Researchers such as Costa and Kallick (2019) and Ahmadabadi, Arasteh, Naveh Ibrahim, and Abbasian (2021) pointed out that leaving the child on their own and the lack of coherent thinking and appropriate guiding support for the mental and behavioral development of the child has resulted in a lack of understanding of the rational process and self-control, which has consequently led to learning and moral problems.

In recent years, non-public schools, under the title "bagless schools," have been established nationwide with the aim of improving the educational and developmental level of students. These types of schools were first established in Italy in 1967, with the concept of "homework." The purpose of establishing these schools was to improve the academic situation of students who experience academic failure; however, their activities gradually took on a broader social dimension. Also, these programs are very useful for children who do not have deep academic problems but need a calm environment for doing homework and supervision by a qualified adult. The "bagless school" is one of those concepts being implemented as an educational strategy in developed countries, and countries that have recently accelerated their development cycle have pursued this macro-educational policy with serious intent. In Iran, "bagless school" or "school-within-school" refers to schools whose principals believe that students should, first, have sufficient rest and freedom at home, and second, that teaching, practice, and assignments should take place only within the school environment so that students can

complete all their academic tasks under the supervision of experienced educators in the educational setting; in other words, this increases concentration in students (Sabzevar, Liaghatdar, & Abedi, 2011).

Sabagh Hassanzadeh and Doroudi (2023), in a study titled "Identifying and prioritizing the educational needs of students from teachers' perspectives," showed that the educational needs of female secondary school students were identified. The results indicated that cultural, religious-belief, behavioral, emotional-psychological, and social factors are the main factors shaping students' educational needs from the teachers' perspective. Among cultural factors, knowledge of indigenous culture was prioritized; in religious-belief factors, knowledge of belief systems; in behavioral factors, teaching self-regulation skills; in emotional-psychological factors, cooperative and group learning; and finally, in social factors, analyzing social values had the highest priority.

Dibayi Saber and Rahimi (2022), in their research on the pathology of educational activities in the Education Organization of Qom from the perspective of teachers, students, and principals, stated that the main problems in educational activities from the perspective of these three groups are related to objectives, content, and learning activities, allocated time for these activities, and implementation strategies. Ahmadabadi et al. (2021) assessed the current status of principals' educational roles. They found that, across six components ethical/behavioral, cognitive development, interpersonal and communication skills, commitment and responsibility, self-regulation, and respect for rules in both the mental and emotional-behavioral education dimensions, improvement actions are required. Mardani Boldaji (2020), in a study titled "Pathology of educational activities from the perspective of educational counselors," concluded that one of the educational problems of this period is the lack of a comprehensive and systematic program and the lack of accurate information about educational needs.

Imen Ershadi and Nami (2019), in an article titled "Evaluation of educational activities in primary schools based on the Fundamental Transformation Document," showed that the implementation status of various educational programs such as "Spring of Knowledge," "Friendship Groups in the Color of God," empowerment performance, holding Islamic Education Week and national occasions, development and equipping of libraries, familiarity with Quran and Ahl al-Bayt, celebration of graduation ceremonies, Quranic competitions, and religious occasions are at a desirable level. However, the status of practical prayer education, the linkage between mosque, school, and family, the performance of imams in congregations, and the implementation of prayer time in primary schools in District 1 of Bandar Abbas is not at a desirable level. Roshan, Kazemi, Alaei, and Ramazani (2011), in an article comparing the importance of managerial and leadership behaviors from the perspectives of teachers and school principals, found that, overall, principals give equal weight to both managerial and leadership

behaviors. However, in leadership components, from the perspective of principals, modeling is more important than managerial behaviors. On the other hand, from the perspective of principals, managerial behaviors are more important than the challenge component in leadership. Also, female principals place greater importance on both managerial and leadership behaviors than male principals do.

Alizadeh Mousavi (2005), in a study titled "A Comparative Investigation of the Effect of Educational Spaces on Students' Moral Development," showed that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of moral judgment development of students who use educational spaces and those who do not use such spaces. Moreover, there is a positive correlation among moral judgment, disciplinary score, age, parents' level of education, and students' academic average. Joshi (2019) also states that over the past two decades, due to recognition of governments' failure in expenditure efficiency and parents' easy access to a diversity of non-public schools, the number of these schools has expanded significantly, especially in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa. Xiao (2018) defines non-public schools as generators of abundant educational resources that not only enable students to acquire cognitive, skill-based, and moral competencies and promote educational equity, but also significantly contribute to the economic and social development of society. Non-public schools in Iran were established after a decade-long suspension of former non-profit schools in 1952, with two main goals: attracting private-sector participation and achieving educational equity through improved educational quality. Today, in addition to their continued growth, they are in intense competition with each other to attract students.

One of the challenging areas in empowering individuals and nurturing creative human beings is education and training. Education, through its multiple functions, can facilitate countries' development paths. However, due to the dynamism of educational centers and the high cost of creating diverse learning opportunities, governments are unable to respond to societal expectations and fulfill their transformative roles adequately. Therefore, one of the government's options is to involve the private sector through the expansion of non-public schools, in the hope that these schools can provide diverse and high-quality services and programs in accordance with societal needs (Bozorgi Nejad, Zarei, Amirian Zadeh, & Kheir, 2019).

School principals have a significant impact on school processes and outcomes, to the extent that they are considered the second most influential factor in students' academic achievement (Rezaei, Nafiseh, & Mirzakhani, 2021). Therefore, considering the importance of the role of principals and the impact of educational domains on students' growth and progress, and given the researcher's five years of experience in the field of education and close contact with the problems of students and principals, the need for investigation and causal analysis in educational domains has been felt. Accordingly, the main research

question is whether there is a significant difference between the educational domains of principals in public and non-public schools.

METHODS:

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-causal comparative in terms of method. It is also cross-sectional in terms of time. The statistical population comprises all primary school principals in Karaj city (according to the Education Organization's report, the total number of primary school principals in Karaj was 900) in the academic year 2023–2024. Using Morgan's table, 240 principals were selected from the total population of Karaj city through cluster random sampling. (A total of 60 principals were randomly selected equally from public and non-public primary schools.)

Research Instrument:

Educational Activities Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Nazari (2022) with 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never), 1 (low), 2 (moderate), 3 (high), and 4 (very high). Initially, the questionnaire was designed with two dimensions of extracurricular educational activities and extracurricular developmental activities. However, due to poor confirmatory factor analysis fit, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, and in this stage, the components of reinforcement, artistic, group, organizational, and religious activities were extracted. The Cronbach's alpha of the extracurricular activities questionnaire was 0.84. The validity was assessed through expert review and confirmed by 10 experts in educational sciences. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.90.

For data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software were employed.

Research Hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis:

There is a difference between the educational domains of public and non-public school principals.

Specific Hypotheses:

- There is a difference between the control educational domain of public and non-public school principals.
- There is a difference between the organizing educational domain of public and non-public school principals.
- There is a difference in the evaluation domain between public and non-public school principals.
- There is a difference between the leadership and guidance educational domain of public and non-public school principals.
- There is a difference between the planning educational domain of public and non-public school principals.

Findings:

The results showed that in the public school group, 60% of participants were male and 40% were female, while in the non-public school group, 53.3% were male and 46.7% were female. The mean age of public school principals was 38.73 years, and that of non-public school principals was 40.70 years. In the public school group, 50% were single and 50% were married, while in the non-public school group, 46.7% were single and 53.3% were married. In public schools, 40% had more than 15 years of work experience, while the rest had less than 15 years. In non-public schools, 43.3% had 11–15 years of experience, 40% had more than 15 years, and 16.7% had 6–10 years. In both groups, most participants held a bachelor's degree (50% in public schools and 70% in non-public schools), while the smallest proportion held a doctoral degree (16.7% in public schools and 3.3% in non-public schools).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Educational Domains

Educational Domains	Public Schools		Non-Public Schools	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Planning	15.06	2.87	14.46	2.19
Organizing	14.70	2.70	13.66	2.33
Evaluation	14.36	2.32	13.70	1.60
Leadership & Guidance	15.23	3.52	15.56	3.53
Control & Supervision	13.53	2.56	14.13	2.88
Total	72.90	7.16	71.53	6.94

According to Table 1, the leadership and guidance component has the highest mean in both public and non-public school groups. Also, in the public school group, control and supervision (13.53) has the lowest mean, and in the non-public school group, organizing (13.66) has the lowest mean.

Table 2: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Group	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Educational Domains	Within groups	2257.067	1	2257.067	42.409	0.001
	Between groups	3086.867	58	53.222		
	Total	5343.933	59			

According to Table 2, the significance level in the educational domains is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the educational domains of public and non-public school principals.

Table 3: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Control	Within groups	46.817	1	46.817	9.879	0.003
	Between groups	274.833	58	4.739		
	Total	321.650	59			

According to Table 3, the significance level in the educational domain of control is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the control educational domains of public and non-public school principals.

Table 4: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Planning	Within groups	166.667	1	166.667	41.855	0.001
	Between groups	230.933	58	3.982		
	Total	397.600	59			

According to Table 4, the significance level is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in planning education between public and non-public school principals.

Table 5: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Organizing	Within groups	106.667	1	106.667	23.698	0.001
	Between groups	261.067	58	4.501		
	Total	367.733	59			

According to Table 5, the significance level in the organizational educational domain is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the organizational educational domains of public and non-public school principals.

Table 6: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Evaluation	Within groups	101.400	1	101.400	15.175	0.001
	Between groups	387.533	58	6.682		
	Total	488.933	59			

According to Table 6, the significance level in the evaluation educational domain is less than 0.05, which indicates a significant difference between the evaluation educational domains of public and non-public school principals.

Table 7: Results of Analysis of Variance

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Guidance and leadership	Within groups	126.150	1	126.150	26.276	0.001
	Between groups	278.433	58	4.801		
	Total	404.583	59			

According to Table 7, the significance level in the leadership and guidance domain is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the leadership and guidance domains of public and non-public school principals.

DISCUSSION:

The present study aimed to compare the educational domains of public and private school principals in elementary schools in Karaj city. The results showed a difference between the educational domains of public and private school principals. These results are consistent with the studies of Lemos et al. (2024), Yokota (2024), Boroumand et al. (2023), Rahmanpour and Hajaji (2023), Goudarzi and Bagheri (2022), Asghari, Yousefi Saeedabadi, and Gholamhosseinzadeh (2021), Imen Ershadi and Nami (2019), Habibi and Lotfi Damsaz (2011), and Roshan, Kazemi, Alaei, and Ramezani (2011). In explaining these results, it can be stated that although management across organizations has similarities, given each institution's goals and the attitudes, values, and worldview of each group, management practices are not the same in all schools.

(Yokota, 2024). For this reason, it can be concluded that the management of public and private schools differs in terms of management methods and educational areas. Based on the results of this study, it seems that despite the differences between public and private schools in some respects, the focus of managers in private schools is not on the quality of the educational environment and changing the atmosphere of schools from a dry and inflexible environment in which the transmitter of educational content and the student are the recipient, but rather on paying attention to high student scores and obtaining short-term results and satisfying parents.

The results showed that there is a difference between the educational areas of control of public and private school managers. These results are consistent with the research of Boroumand et al. (2023), Yokota (2024), Tianlun (2024), and Sabagh Hassanzadeh. Doroudi (2023), Goudarzi and Bagheri (2022), Dibayi Saber and Rahimi (2022), Ahmadabadi et al. (2022), Naseri et al. (2021), Asghari et al. (2021), Ghasemi et al. (2020), Tabroni et al. (2021), Khaleqkhah et al. (2016), are consistent. In explaining these results, it can be stated that, in social reality, every group and organizational activity requires some form of control or supervision, so that activities and methods of doing things can be improved. The achievement of educational goals can be accelerated. School management is not just about maintaining order in the school. However, school leaders and administrators must possess organizational, monitoring, guidance, and individual characteristics and special skills to monitor, control, identify, and respond to students' growing needs (Nazari et al., 2011). To combat the dynamic world that surrounds them, schools must develop strategies to guide and manage these changes with the help of administrators. Therefore, comparing the activities of public and private school administrators, we find that despite changes, developments, instability, and environmental uncertainty affecting schools, there is a need for administrators to witness improved performance in public schools.

The results showed that there is a difference between the educational planning areas of public and private school administrators. These results are consistent with the research of Lemos et al. (2024), Abualrish and Khasawneh (2024), Tianlun (2024), Rahmanpour and Hajaji (2023), Morsali and Yari (2022), Dibayi Saber and Rahimi (2022), Ahmadabadi et al. (2022), Naseri et al. (2021), Asghari et al. (2021), Mardani Boldaji (2020), Ghasemi et al. (2020), Imen Ershadi and Nami (2019), Tabroni et al. (2021), Karimi et al. (2013). In explaining these results, it can be stated that educational programs in non-governmental schools, with the facilities they have available, can lead to the growth and development of students' personalities, enrichment of leisure time and attention to their individual needs, as well as acculturation and training in various life skills, and the practice of participation and the flourishing of their talents. In addition, the ability to cooperate, make informed decisions, understand, support, organize, manage conflict with people, negotiate, cope with

emotional stress, express oneself, clarify religious values, and avoid danger are some of the benefits of implementing appropriate educational programs to improve students' socialization (Hassanzadeh and Doroudi, 2014). The most important goal of educational activities in schools is to provide the necessary motivation and incentives for the continued, natural, and healthy growth and development of students, and to provide the basis for acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values accepted by society to benefit from a healthy life. In fact, the efforts that students make under the guidance, planning, and supervision of their educational instructors so that their inherent abilities and talents flourish and become actual. In other words, non-governmental school administrators must be able to plan, organize, direct, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate by leveraging students' talents and environmental conditions to achieve educational goals.

The results showed a difference in the organizational training areas of public and private school principals. These results are consistent with the research of Yokota (2024), Boroumand et al. (2023), Rahmanpour and Hajaji (2023), Goudarzi and Bagheri (2022), Imen Ershadi and Nami (2019), and Roshan, Kazemi, Alaei, and Ramezani (2011). In explaining these results, it can be stated that the human resources of public schools are provided by government institutions and their recruitment and growth system is arranged based on specific rules, and in practice, the administrators of public schools do not have complete authority over their human resources; however, in private schools, the degree of authority over the number and quality of school staff recruitment is much greater. Governing institutions must have the skills to carry out effective selection processes. Selectors may need assistance or training, for example, to be trained in good interviewing techniques. Private schools have the authority to determine their own organization and educational standards. They are Tuition fees, financial assistance, and other private sources, provided instead of government funding.

The results showed that there is a difference in the educational areas evaluated by public and private school principals. These results are consistent with the research of Tianlun (2024), Rahmanpour and Hajaji (2023), Morsali and Yari (2022), Ahmadabadi et al. (2022), Naseri et al. (2021), Mardani Boldaji (2020), Ghasemi et al. (2020), and Imen Ershadi and Nami (2019). In explaining these results, it can be stated that the way private schools evaluate lessons and plan based on them to continue the process and improve each student's learning quality is one of the distinguishing features of private schools compared to public schools. In private schools, stakeholders are in direct contact with the schools. Due to the high costs they pay for their children's education in such schools, parents demand a high academic load for school staff and discuss it with administrators to be aware of it. Administrators have a higher ability to interact with parents. In fact, administrators in these schools are capable of playing multifaceted roles and are prioritized for management.

In this context, where the work of school administrators is characterized by increasing expectations and greater demands for accountability, more requests have been made for better professional preparation programs and greater attention to programs tailored to the needs of the school.

The results showed that there is a difference between the areas of training, guidance, and leadership of public and private school administrators. These results are consistent with the research of Abualrish and Khasawneh (2024), Rahmanpour and Hajaji (2014), Dibayi Saber and Rahimi (2014), Naseri et al. (2000), Asghari et al. (2000), Mardani Boldaji (2013), Tabroni et al. (2021), and Karimi et al. (2013).

In explaining these results, it can be stated that guidance and leadership in private schools differ from those in non-government schools, and that non-government schools allow managers to improve their performance when competing in a turbulent, unpredictable environment. Guidance and leadership can be a source of competitive advantage for the organization, and using this advantage can significantly contribute to achieving higher returns in the short and long term.

CONCLUSION:

The results showed a significant difference between the educational domains of public and private school principals. Therefore, the results of the present study can be of interest to managers and educational officials of the Ministry of Education.

The study's statistical population poses limitations on the generalizability of its findings, interpretations, and causal attributions for the variables under study. The sample under study consisted of elementary school principals, and caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to other populations.

According to the results, it is suggested that officials pay more attention to public schools and better supervise non-public schools, so that no greater gap is created between them, which would be contrary to social justice. It is suggested that managers' attention and emphasis on the quantitative aspect of work may be due to employees' lack of ability and motivation, or to employees' suspicion that managers need training to change their attitudes. It is also suggested that, by providing a suitable platform for group activities, they take action to increase their planning ability and activity. It is recommended that officials take effective steps to meet managers' material needs, so that by addressing material and livelihood needs, managers' attention is focused on higher-level needs and the possibility of further prosperity is created.

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