

Research Article

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Organizational Forgetting in Educational Institutions: Rethinking Organizational Change

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This inquiry examines the phenomenon of organizational forgetting, aiming to elucidate the plausible antecedents and consequences of forgetting. Furthermore, this study examines diverse approaches and strategies that school principals employ to identify effective methods for forgetting in organizational settings.

Materials/methods. The study employed a qualitative research approach in its data collection and analysis procedures, incorporating a phenomenological design to explain the phenomenon's impact on the participant's ability to maintain a positive school climate in educational settings. This study consisted of 15 participants serving in school leadership positions, who were selected through a snowball sampling method.

Results. The main findings of the research indicate that official regulations compelled school principals to overlook, and the change in human resources contributed to this oversight. The study clearly confirms that forgetting can be managed with some strategies. Principals' stances, organizational routines, physical space, government policies, social media, environmental support, and communication skills are the structures involved in the process.

Originality/value. This study clarifies how organizational forgetting serves a managerial purpose. Furthermore, this study closes a research gap in the literature about the impact of organizational forgetting on schools. It is worth noting that when the literature on forgetting is reviewed, there are relatively few articles that examine the phenomenon in qualitative research.

Limitations. The present study is subject to certain constraints, including its restricted scope to eight schools in Istanbul and its consideration of solely the viewpoints of vice principals and school principals.



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1. Introduction

There is a need to utilize all resources effectively and efficiently in achieving the organization's goals. Karip (2004) employs the concept of management to describe individual and group-based behaviors aimed at achieving a common goal. In this regard, actions are carried out in cooperation and coordination. Similarly, Follett's organization theory focuses on the human community (Akbaş & Taner, 2022). Barutçugil (2002) emphasizes the interaction between people and groups, stating that organizations are very complex. However, Carl Rogers emphasizes the importance of the internal frame of reference in understanding people's behavior, while underscoring the socio-psychological dimension (Barutçugil, 2002). Evidently, people are the main actors in maintaining the organization's effectiveness.

Over time, the interaction between the physical space and the organization's members creates a strong connection between the individuals and the organization. The maturation of the employees within the organization and the change in their way of thinking are indirectly reflected. Hence, some human traits, such as routines, memory, and learning, are used in organizational contexts. As indicated in the quote, people choose the habits that impact their future. Organizations also have routines, some of which carry organizations into the future. However, opportunities may be missed if some routines remain constant over time. In other words, overlearning from past successes and failures can be an obstacle to innovation (Bettis, Wong, & Blettner, 2011). The given case refers to the managerial function of organizational forgetting.

The role of educational institutions is of critical significance because they both influence and are affected by social changes. Considering the system approach, the input of the school system is humans, the process is teaching methods, and the output is the educational achievements of humans (Karip, 2004). Moreover, the process gets complicated by the fact that the output is later re-entered into the school as input. As purposeful actors, teachers and principals reflect on the meaning and effects of their actions (Açıklın et al., 2022). From a broad perspective, schools are at the center of changing policies. In the process of change, sharing meanings of actions is an important factor in sustainability (Açıklın, 2016; Fullan, 2015).

The changing social structure has indirect effects on schools. As Açıklın (2016, p. 84) mentions, "schools have difficulty adapting to it. "Several researchers have reported that actors' tendencies towards change (Kondakci et al., 2015, 2019) and organizational agility (Yazıcı, 2020) are crucial to sustaining change. Furthermore, the studies published in the various issues describing the strategic function of organizational forgetting (Kavosi et al., 2021; Miller & Martignoni, 2015; Sy, 2022; Zeng & Chen, 2010) indicate a need to understand the perceptions, various strategies of forgetting, and school principals' experiences in creating a positive school climate. The study aims to make several contributions to the growing field of research by exploring individuals' experiences of forgetting during the change process.

As a complement to learning, organizational forgetting is defined as a mechanism for eliminating incompatibility between existing and acquired knowledge and for discarding outdated information from memory to implement change. However, as mentioned above, there are limited empirical studies available in the literature, both nationally and internationally, especially in educational settings. There has been an increased recognition that more attention needs to be paid to this area. Hence, this study clarifies how organizational forgetting serves a managerial purpose. It also aims to make an original contribution to the literature by providing practical implications for school products and educational management policies. Hence, this study aims to close a research gap in the literature regarding the impact of organizational forgetting on schools.

The central question in this research is how participants experience organizational forgetting at schools. It aims to explore the phenomenon of organizational forgetting by identifying its potential

antecedents and consequences, as well as examining strategies that school principals use to manage forgetting effectively in educational organizations. The study addresses a timely and underexplored issue, offering the potential to make a significant contribution to the field of educational leadership and management. This study aimed to determine the following research questions:

1. What are the possible causes of organizational forgetting?
2. How does the organizational forgetting occur?
3. Is the phenomenon of organizational forgetting managed?
4. What are the consequences of organizational forgetting?

2. Literature Review

Although many definitions of organizational forgetting exist, Martin de Holan is mostly referenced. Martin de Holan (2011) defines the phenomenon of forgetting as the facilitation of change in a situation where existing and newly innovated knowledge conflicts. The effect of forgetting is context-dependent (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011; Martin de Holan & Phillips, 2004). That is, forgetting critical knowledge within the organization may lead to a loss of competitiveness, while forgetting existing knowledge to explore better alternatives contributes to the organization's growth.

There are different classifications of organizational forgetting. Martin de Holan et al. (2004) examine organizational forgetting in two aspects according to the source and mode of knowledge. Figure 1 illustrates it.

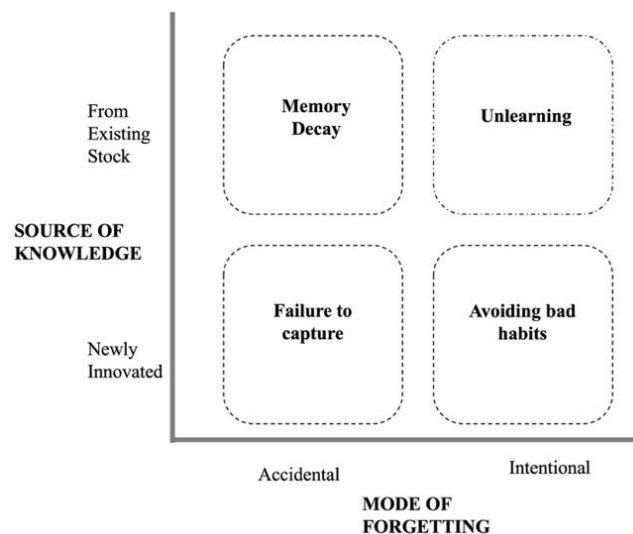


Figure 1. Types of Organizational Forgetting (Martin de Holan, Phillips & Lawrance, 2004, p.47)

Figure 1 illustrates that the intentional forgetting of existing knowledge is referred to as unlearning, whereas accidental forgetting is referred to as memory decay. While intentionally forgetting newly acquired knowledge is defined as avoiding bad habits, accidental forgetting is defined as the failure to capture it.

Unlearning begins with the realization of knowledge that hinders the organization's success (Martin de Holan et al., 2004). In the process of change, some prior learning may have a limiting effect on subsequent learning (Karakose et al., 2025a; Mariano et al., 2018). It is stated that these learnings are often seen in routine practices in organizations. In other words, learning can be achieved by abandoning or changing the routines within the organization (Akgün et al., 2007; Karakose & Polat, 2025). On the other hand, avoiding bad habits emphasizes negative acquisitions gained from collective practices within the organization. Furthermore, it is recommended not to overlearn from success or failure (Bettis et al., 2011; Bettis & Prahalad, 1995). As Yıldız and Keskinliç (2015) suggest,

the first step towards change is through organizational forgetting. In a similar vein, Eryılmaz (2016) emphasizes the necessity of forgetting in organizational learning.

It is stated that organizational forgetting occurs as an integral element of learning after learning (Akgün et al., 2007; Azmi, 2008; Monji & Shamsi, 2018). The importance of the phenomenon can be evaluated from two perspectives (Martin de Holan et al., 2004). On the one hand, organizations have limited resources. Failure to use acquired competence when needed is explained as a waste. On the other hand, new competencies are needed to progress and may require some preliminary learning to be forgotten.

Within the scope of the educational discipline, Ayduğ and Ağaoğlu (2022, 2023) and Eryılmaz (2015) empirically study organizational forgetting in higher education institutions of Türkiye. Ayduğ and Ağaoğlu (2022) revealed the organizational forgetting levels of institutions based on the opinions of higher education staff. The findings of study indicate that the instructors' intentional forgetting levels are moderate, and the accidental forgetting dimension is high.

In a similar context, researchers conducted a 2023 study that investigated the mediating role of intentional organizational forgetting in the relationship between organizational learning and innovation management. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between organizational learning, innovation management, and intentional forgetting. The multiple case study conducted by Eryılmaz (2015) found that organizational structure prevents forgetting in cases where organizations desire to do so.

In the international literature, Ghasemi (2015) examines the relationship between organizational agility, effectiveness, and forgetting with education management personnel. The findings determine a significant positive relationship between organizational forgetting and organizational agility. That is, organizational forgetting increases the components of organizational agility. Fernandez and Suñé (2009) discuss the impact of organizational forgetting in higher education institutions in terms of changing teaching staff. The results underline the effect of standardization and specialization on forgetting. When specialization is high, and standardization is low, organizational forgetting costs increase. On the other hand, Mousavi and Mohammadi (2018) examine the variables of organizational policy perception, resistance to change, and organizational forgetting. The findings reveal that the perception of organizational policy had a positive relationship with the variable of resistance to change, and the effect of organizational forgetting on resistance to change was negative. In light of the research mentioned above, this study aims to make several contributions to the growing area of research by exploring the experiences of forgetting in the context of change within Turkish educational settings.

3. Methodology

This section describes the research design, participants, data collection tools, and analysis sections.

3.1. Research Design

The research aimed to uncover the essence of the forgetting process and participants' experiences within educational institutions. The study employed a qualitative research approach in the data collection and analysis procedures (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2011), incorporating a phenomenological design (Padilla-Diaz, 2015) to explain the impact of the phenomenon on the management of the participant's ability to maintain a positive school climate in their institution.

“The qualitative research approach aims to explain the process by which people interpret their experiences in a given context and time interval and construct meaning in a systematic way” (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 4). Among the strengths of the qualitative research approach, the

design has been utilized to investigate the common experiences shared by the human community. Similarly, Creswell (2007) defines this pattern as "the interpretation of individuals' experiences of a phenomenon or concept" (p. 58). This phenomenological research, which explores meaning, has contributed to understanding participants' experiences. Therefore, this research was designed to investigate participants' experiences of forgetting.

3.2. Participants

In phenomenological research, it is recommended that "the group to be studied should consist of approximately 3 to 15 individuals to deeply analyze common experiences" (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 104). However, the main criterion in qualitative research is data saturation. This concept refers to the fact that data collection can be stopped when the research purpose is achieved (Creswell, 2007). This study consisted of 15 participants. The participants were volunteers working at various educational levels affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) during the 2023-2024 academic year. In this study, snowball sampling, a type of purposive sampling, was employed.

In the qualitative approach, "sampling is likely to be selected among purposive sampling methods" (Berg, 2012, p. 33) since, considering the phenomenon of the research, participants who "have experienced this phenomenon will provide data are needed" (Yin, 2011, p. 88). Snowball sampling occurs by reaching out to new participants as an extension of the existing participants and is acceptable, even if it is not random, as long as it is purposeful (Yin, 2011). The advantage of this sampling method is that it allows for the inclusion of many participants who are eligible for the study (Creswell, 2020). Inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: (a) currently working at schools affiliated with MoNE as a school principal or vice principal during the 2023-2024 academic year; (b) holding a role in the position of school leadership for at least 2 years; and (c) having any experience related to organizational forgetting in the educational settings.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

CODE	DUTY	GENDER	AGE	GRADUATION	TENURE (YEAR)	AS A PRINCIPAL (YEAR)	PRINCIPAL IN THE CURRENT SCHOOL (YEAR)
P1	Vice Principal	Male	35	Bachelor	11	7	7
P2	School Principal	Male	55	Bachelor	30	15	8,5
P3	School Principal	Male	42	Master	19	11	5
P4	Vice Principal	Male	30	Bachelor	9	4	4
P5	School Principal	Female	58	Bachelor	30	10	3
P6	Vice Principal	Female	29	Bachelor	5	2	2
P7	School Principal	Male	41	Master	18	8	4
P8	Vice Principal	Male	36	Master	15	2	2
P9	Vice Principal	Male	47	Master	25	15	2
P10	School Principal	Male	42	Master	22	19	5
P11	Vice Principal	Male	35	Master	15	10	10
P12	School Principal	Male	50	Master	26	8	6 months
P13	Vice Principal	Female	32	Master	8	2	2
P14	Vice Principal	Female	42	Master	6	2	2
P15	School Principal	Male	42	Master	18	10	10

8 of the participants are vice principals, and 7 are school principals. Most participants are male and hold a master's degree. Their professional seniority ranges from 5 to 30 years. The length of service in the managerial position ranges from 2 to 19 years. The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours. To gather sincere answers and conduct field observations, the interviews were held in the school principals' offices. In the demographic information, the trainings attended by the managers were asked and not included in the table, as it was stated that the majority did not remember them. However, among the participants are school principals (P3, P7, P8, and P12) who have worked abroad for 5 years, participated in international congresses, took part in in-service instructor trainee for teachers, and ranked 4th in Istanbul in the MEB-EKYS exam (MoNE-Principal Selection Exam for Educational Institutions).

3.3. Trustworthiness and Instrument Development

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection process, the semi-structured interview form was first developed in line with the systematic literature review and research questions. In this context, a systematic review was conducted, encompassing national and international studies on organizational forgetting, and a question pool was created in line with the themes and concepts identified in a previous systematic review in the same domain. In addition, an academician with extensive studies specifically focused on the research topic in Turkey was interviewed via email, and their opinions contributed to the enrichment of the form in terms of content. The first version of the interview form was evaluated by three academicians who are experts in educational management and qualitative research methods. In line with the expert feedback, some questions were clarified, and two new questions were added to cover different dimensions of organizational forgetting. Before the final interviews, a pilot interview was conducted with a school administrator who met the criteria but was not included in the study. As a result of the pilot application, the clarity and flow of the questions were tested, and the interview form was finalized through the implementation of necessary minor adjustments.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection methods in phenomenological research include interviews, document analysis, and observation (Creswell, 2007). Interviews are used to obtain participants' knowledge, experience, or interpretation (Stake, 2010). In this study, the researchers used a semi-structured face-to-face interview. Semi-structured interviews involve a predetermined set of questions. These questions are asked of each participant in a systematic and consistent order. "These interviews have the advantage of giving participants the freedom to go off-topic" (Creswell, 2007; Berg & Lune, 2012, pp.112-114). The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission using a voice recording and dictation program. With the dictation program, the participants controlled the specified expressions.

Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability is the expression that all processes of literature review, data collection, analysis, presentation, and interpretation of findings are compatible with each other and that all process steps are meticulously handled (Merriam, 2019). In this regard, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The researchers determined interview questions by conducting an in-depth literature review. Then, they sent the form to an expert studying the phenomena. Besides, they prepared a meeting protocol for participants. Berg and Lune (2012) recommended that researchers interview participants in their settings. Therefore, it was decided to conduct the interviews in participants' offices to ensure a safe meeting environment.

This study was deemed ethically appropriate by the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakif University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board, with the number 2024-32/24 dated February 8, 2024. Participation was completely relied on voluntary. All participants provided informed consent. Pseudonyms were used instead of real identities to ensure confidentiality, and no identifying

information was included in any publications or reports. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

3.5. Data Analysis

In the research, content analysis was used to find codes, categories, and themes. The analysis of the data was conducted through the transcription of the interviews. Thanks to the dictation program used during the interviews, the control of participants after the interview was ensured promptly. In content analysis, Saldaña's (2013) analysis cycle was preferred. Saldaña examined the analysis in three cycles. First, the researchers created the codes by reading the transcriptions. Afterwards, they found the similarities between the determined codes and created the categories. Finally, the same categories were grouped under themes.

The analysis was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, initial coding was performed to determine the meaningful units in the data. In the second stage, the relationships of similar codes were identified and categorized with axial coding. In the last stage, these categories were transformed into themes compatible with the research questions through selective coding.

To increase the reliability of the study and minimize researcher bias, the coding process was conducted independently by two researchers. Differences that emerged during the coding process were reconciled through mutual interviews. The analysis continued until data saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes or information emerged. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted with an academic expert in qualitative research, ensuring objectivity in line with the feedback on the thematic structure.

4. Results

In this section, all the findings obtained for the research questions were presented respectively.

4.1. Findings on the First Sub-Problem

The first research problem was addressed to investigate the possible causes of organizational forgetting, and a range of responses was elicited. Based on the interview, possible reasons were grouped into three dimensions: legal, human resources, and change, and five codes were created. In the legal dimension, legislation was identified; in the human resources dimension, school environment and school profile were noted; in the change dimension, culture and workload were observed.

The legal dimension refers to the code "legislation," which emphasizes the frequent changes in the scope of MoNE. Participants recounted how recent government regulations and practices had forced them to abandon their routines. The human resources dimension refers to the codes of "school environment" and "school profile." Participants described how the neighborhood in which the school was located affected them and changed their previous ideas or practices. Furthermore, they noted some comparisons of schools they worked at in terms of student and teacher profiles. Lastly, the change dimension consists of two codes named "culture" and "workload." They mentioned culture by emphasizing shifting values and norms within the schools. The workload code derived from recurring mentions of excessive duties and time pressure.

Table 2. Causes of Organizational Forgetting

Causes of Forgetting	
Legal	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12,
Dimension Legislation	P13, P15

Human Resources	School Environment	P2, P3, P5, P7, P9
	School Profile	P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15
Change	Culture	P1, P5, P7, P9, P13, P15
	Workload	P8, P9, P11, P14

A common view among participants was that the change in regulations had led to a decline in awareness within the organization. As some participants said:

"We have written documents coming to us all the time from the district, some of which are one-time and some of which are annual jobs. One-time submissions are always done and completed at the time and forwarded to the necessary authority. And then it's forgotten." (P4)

"The regulation on assessment and evaluation has changed, the regulation on passing the grade related to assessment and evaluation has changed, and this leads to forgetting." (P6)

"I just received a document from the district about E-OKUL (online school system in Türkiye) absenteeism entries. Absence entries will no longer be made retroactively." (P11)

"Innovations need to be more acceptable. Teachers should not have difficulty in applying it. For example, we were implementing total quality management. Do you know why it was forgotten? It was hard; the process was hard. So, it's easier to forget." (P12)

"Institutionally, the regulations have changed, and the appointments of managers are changing. It's been five years since I arrived, and I've only recently become familiar with the institution and its environment. There is no archive when any information is requested. This school was founded in 1962, so there is no information available about the teachers who worked there in the past. The memory of the institution of previous years has been erased." (P9)

As understood, short-term tasks were forgotten, while legislative changes forced them to forget. On the other hand, it was stated that the difficulty level of the applications in the current situation affected the speed of the forgetting process.

Secondly, in the human resources dimension, it was examined that changing environmental conditions and their effects on the school's stakeholders led to forgetting. P7 for environmental conditions and P2 for the changing education and training profile stated the following:

"I started my career in 2005 in Dilovası. I started in a very disadvantaged place; the need for teachers was extremely high there, and anyone who completed a two-year vocational college could apply for a position in the Dilovası district national education system and become a paid teacher. As one of my students said, "My teacher, there is no stallholder left in the country." Such practices have been forgotten. You should not forget the positive things that happened in the past; these can create serious references. Negative things, the negative atmosphere in the teacher's room, there may be disagreements for a while, they should be forgotten, but the achievements in history, exemplary studies, etc., should be remembered often, not forgotten." (P7)

"Due to the change in the educational environment in Türkiye, the profile of students and parents has changed. For example, in the past, let me put it this way, children could be guided more easily because there was no technology such as television, telephones, and the like. However, today, due to these technological developments, children are more exposed to negative factors from outside. In today's conditions, we need to develop a new perspective by taking all these into account, that is, we cannot think and educate according to the old conditions by ignoring this technology and ignoring the environmental impact on the outside impact." (P2)

On the other hand, participants mentioned the influence of the change on the long-term culture and the additional workload it created. As some participants expressed:

"I've read something or watched it. I don't remember clearly, like it's not always useful in digitalization. In America, whiteboards are used in the schools of the children of principals in Silicon Valley, but there is a situation where we are at the level of getting technology right away; how true is this? It can create a disadvantage. KTS (Quality Monitoring System), for example. If you let the schools do this, it is already being done. We did

a lot of things like renewing those educational environments, and we didn't just share them. Just go to that site and share it there; it is checked every month, and it is scored. Evaluation is being done among all schools." (P1)

"I think there may be forgetting due to the intensity of our workload. For example, if I consider our own school, we have approximately 1,480 students, and now the task of carrying out related work is in the hands of three vice principals. When you think about the number of teachers, there are so many things that we need to do, from the curriculum to the follow-up of the students by branch teachers, from the maintenance and repair of the school to the activities that need to be carried out outside, as a matter of fact, this is entirely the responsibility of three vice principals and a school principal." (P8)

To summarize, it was stated that the changes made at the official level necessitated the abandonment of existing practices. Additionally, it was noted that the development of information technologies and their impact on culture could lead to the forgetting of some pre-learned teaching methods. It was noted that the teaching staff's age range, the environment's family profile, and the workload associated with innovation led to forgetting. In this respect, the level of user-friendliness of the application in terms of forgetting was emphasized.

4.2. Findings on the Second Sub-Problem

The second research problem sought to analyze how organizational forgetting occurs, and a range of responses was elicited. A minority of participants referred to the conscious process, while most alluded to both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the process.

Table 3. Forgetting Process

Forgetting Process				
Conscious	P11, P12, P14			
Unconscious	P4, P5, P9, P10, P13, P1, P2, P3, P6, P7			
Both	P8, P15			
Actors	Teacher	School Administration	Policy Makers	All Stakeholders
	P1, P4, P7, P11, P12	P2, P5, P6, P7, P10, P13, P15	P2, P7, P9, P10, P15	P3, P8, P11, P14

A minority of the participants cited that forgetting is a conscious process. As one of the participants said:

"Our area is a bit more problematic. We had many difficulties in maintaining discipline. That's why education was in the fifth or sixth plan. Firstly, there were harmful habits and conflicts between male and female students. First, we coped with them. I tried extremely hard. Of course, it took my time. I had police friends; I got help from them. We also received assistance from the shopkeepers in the school environment, as the school had no prior relationship with them when I arrived. I built a connection between the environment and the school. I also solved the reflections of the harmful substance on discipline within the school. I formalized the punishments and contacted their parents. That's how they were resolved. Afterwards, those problematic students did not choose our school. The profile of students attending the school has also begun to change. And I think I made people forget about the negative perceptions of school." (P11)

Some participants attributed the unconscious process of forgetting to the following reasons.

"I think it's a process the brain automatically regulates. I don't particularly try to forget; it gives its own self-control; it can analyze whether it's important or not." (P5)

"They say that everyone walks at their own pace, either when the management team changes or the legislation changes, you have to forget." (P9)

Most participants focused on both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the process. As one of them said:

"The frequent changes in the regulations are significant because they both accelerate and trigger organizational forgetting; for example, let me tell you the most recent example we have experienced. The issue of student absenteeism, which has been a habit for years, has changed this year. However, many school boards, including mine, still adhere to former habits. In the recent regulation, when the student is absent for two days in a row, the parent is asked to be informed, but because of old habits, that is, for about 10 years, the regulation said that the absent student must be notified on the 5th, 10th, 15th and 25th days, so it is hard for us. Curriculum changes, content changes at school, changes in the field, and many other factors change; even a change in duty location causes many things to be forgotten. For example, I started here as a teacher, worked as a vice principal, then became principal, and subsequently returned to the vice principal role. I'm the principal now. Even these changes. To be continued in a managerial sense, there must be forgetting; habits must be abandoned. I think there is a method for this: rotation. There should be rotation in teachers as in principals, and the rotation period of principals should not be extended too much because habits change routines and the climate of the school." (P15)

Finally, the participants were asked to mention the key actors in the forgetting process at school. Most of the participants referred to the school administration.

"There is a saying that it is as much as a school principal; this is true. It is a teamwork. It's about dedication in the team; we need to move from the concept of assigned teachers to dedicated teachers or dedicated principals. In other words, one must see it as a profession, not a job, because they are different." (P2)

"I have young colleagues at school; they've just started, and they're going to continue as the way I shape them. For example, we had an application last year; we took it based on the board's decision. Each teacher would give a sample lesson to the teachers, and after the lesson was over, we would evaluate it. Candidate teachers were giving exemplary lessons on their subject. Teachers used different teaching methods. I didn't make participation compulsory for teachers, but I prepared a list for some teachers to participate. The fact that you entered the KPSS exam (a central exam for teachers to be appointed) does not mean that you know how to teach and behave here." (P5)

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4.3. Findings on the Third Sub-Problem

The third research problem aimed to deduce whether the phenomenon of organizational forgetting is managed or not, and multiple answers were extracted. Most participants remarked that the phenomenon could be managed, and seven codes were created from the strategies: administrative approach, routine, physical environment, government policies, social media, environmental support, and communication.

Table 4. Management of Forgetting

Management of Forgetting															
Manageable	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15														
Strategies	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Administrative approach</th> <th>Routine</th> <th>Physical environment</th> <th>Government policies</th> <th>Social media</th> <th>Environmental support</th> <th>Communication</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>P2, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13</td> <td>P15, P11, P9, P5</td> <td>P15, P12, P13, P7, P3</td> <td>PP2, P7</td> <td>P3, P7, P9, P14</td> <td>P3, P5, P10, P11, P13</td> <td>P3, P6, P7, P9, P10,</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Administrative approach	Routine	Physical environment	Government policies	Social media	Environmental support	Communication	P2, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13	P15, P11, P9, P5	P15, P12, P13, P7, P3	PP2, P7	P3, P7, P9, P14	P3, P5, P10, P11, P13	P3, P6, P7, P9, P10,
Administrative approach	Routine	Physical environment	Government policies	Social media	Environmental support	Communication									
P2, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13	P15, P11, P9, P5	P15, P12, P13, P7, P3	PP2, P7	P3, P7, P9, P14	P3, P5, P10, P11, P13	P3, P6, P7, P9, P10,									

Unmanageable	P1, P4, P8 Personality	Function of knowledge
	P1	P4, P8

Most of the participants pointed out that forgetting can be managed. Among the strategies used, they mentioned the administrative approach and communication mostly. Some of the participants stated:

“It is very important to have communication, to have a regular dialogue on the issue. Posters, billboard arrangements, interviews, and the administration need to follow.” (P13)

“I always try to be a guide and model when it comes to being late for class, for example. ... A cleaning staff said to me, “Teacher, we used to say, my son, are you the principal? You come at 11?” to the students coming late. But now, we can’t say that because you come before everyone.” (P5)

Only three of the participants stated that the process was unmanageable. These statements are supported by personality, the function of knowledge, and its multivariable structure. They remarked:

“It is a situation that depends on the person and his self-education. The character of the administration depends on the character of the person, whether it will take the initiative or maintain the existing one.” (P1)

“We don't have room in our memory to make room for everything here in our brains; we can have difficulties in daily life. The brain also has a capacity, and the brain automatically adjusts it in the direction of whether the information is important or not.” (P4)

In summary, it can be said that the participants were aware of their strategic importance in the process. These expressions were as follows: supporting the idea of creating, following, guiding, ensuring participation through effective communication, making changes in the physical space, announcing the change via social media, and thus receiving environmental support. The success of the school's student profile would, in turn, increase teacher motivation and happiness. On the other hand, a minority of participants argued that it was unmanageable and referred to the uncontrollability of the situation. They highlighted the multidimensions, even related to people's characters and teacher biases towards the function of knowledge.

4.4. Findings on the Fourth Sub-Problem

The fourth research problem aimed to reveal the consequences of organizational forgetting, eliciting a range of responses. The results were grouped as positive and negative within the scope of their effect on educational management.

Table 5. Consequences of Forgetting

Consequences of Forgetting in Educational Management			
Positive	Student benefit	Organizational climate	Routines
	P1, P2, P3, P5, P9, P12, P14	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15	P3, P7, P11, P15
Negative	Administrative hitch	Repetition of negativity	
	P4, P7, P8, P12, P13, P15	P10	

Almost all respondents alluded to both the positive and negative aspects of forgetting. Two participants (P4 and P8) appeared to cite only negative dimension. Positive results of organizational forgetting were grouped into three categories: student benefits, organizational climate, and routines.

"For some teachers, they have negative perceptions of students. For example, we are conducting mock exams, which we did not make mandatory at first. However, we observe the participation of all students from one branch, and when we look at the other branch, the participation is very low, or the exams aren't being solved carefully. Teachers with 20-27 years of experience are especially resistant. These attitudes of teachers indirectly affect the student." (P12)

"The negativities of the past should be forgotten. For example, before I arrived, the school's management staff had undergone significant changes, resulting in different practices. Everyone was making excuses. First, we planned activities for both the students and the teachers. When I made plans to encourage students to participate in sports, a former PE teacher was constantly talking negatively about this issue, reducing motivation. For example, forgetting about it increased motivation." (P7)

"We have friends that we have been working with for a long time. Our wishes are different. For ten years, we have been saying in every meeting, for example, that we may not want what we wanted last year or vice versa. But the same conversation is always going on like this did not exist last year. For example, teachers' shift duty, we had a double shift in February, but our friend was appointed to another school. What should I do now, teacher? Should I say come and perform the duty? Such ridiculous things can happen. I understand their fatigue. That's why I give them flexibility in how they attend class, but there are things that I also can't do. Old practices need to be forgotten for various tasks for the school." (P11)

For the negative consequences, participants expressed their thoughts in terms of administrative hitches and the repetition of negativity. The statements indicating the negative results are listed below respectively. The statements are listed below respectively.

"Regulations change as time progresses. For example, a man applies to the court and says, "I was a student at a school between such and such a date, something like this happened to me there, for example, the teacher at the school treated me like this, that's why I am suing this man." In today's regulation, there may be an idea about this or the opposite, but in the former regulation, there may be a situation about the will of that person. It is necessary to remember the guidance regulation of that time. Otherwise, it may cause disruption." (P15)

"You draw strength from your past, and by remembering it, you can take bolder steps into the future." (P10)

To summarize, it was emphasized that forgetting some negative memories, difficulties experienced at the time, or old practices will increase motivation and happiness within the school. It was also stated that the change in the physical environment and the replacement of some routines with new ones mostly work for the benefit of the student. Considering negative consequences, it was seen that the legal dimension was often emphasized. It was mentioned that initiating legal action for a past date due to changes in legislation and practices could cause an administrative hitch if the former regulation had been forgotten.

To provide a holistic view of the findings from the four subproblems, Figure 2 visualizes the relationships among the causes, processes, management strategies, and outcomes of organizational forgetting in educational institutions.

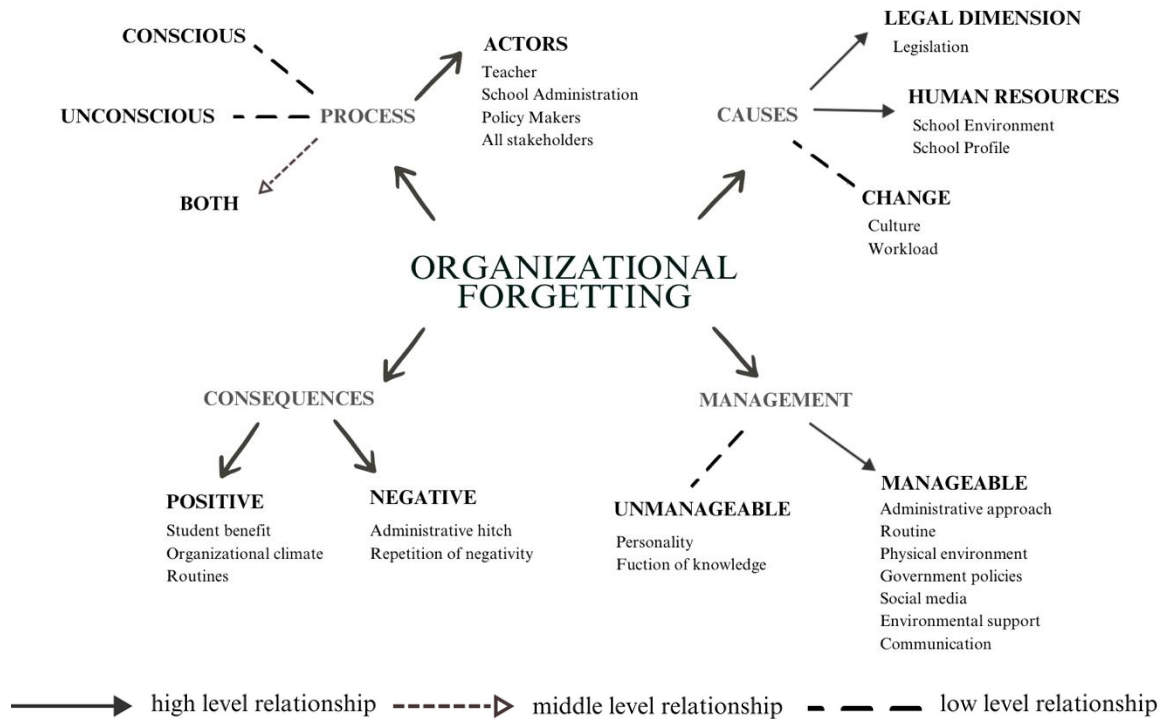


Figure 2. Organizational Forgetting in Educational Institutions

Figure 2 addresses the phenomenon of organizational forgetting in the context of educational settings with a multidimensional approach. The findings suggest that participants are aware of strategies to manage forgetting. Notably, it is acknowledged that there are additional mechanisms and conditions beyond formal managerial responsibilities that may facilitate the management of the forgetting.

5. Discussion

Most participants stated that official regulations compelled them to forget, and the change in human resources contributed to the forgetting. The finding is consistent with the study of Mehrizi et al. (2009) and Becker (2008). Depending on whether the official documents sent to schools are short or long-term, their effect on the forgetting process is highlighted in the study. Besides, it is revealed that the rational explanation and application of alternative knowledge expedites forgetting. Additionally, the findings of Uğurlu et al. (2020) have highlighted various elements related to both organizational internal and external environments. While the business climate and cooperation strategy affect the unlearning process externally, organizational structure, human resources policies, employee characteristics, and organizational culture trigger the unlearning process.

Another focus of the research is to analyze the organizational forgetting process. A high correlation is not found in the process. However, it is understood that the participants highlight both the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the process. The participants evaluate the process in terms of initiators and observers. While it is a conscious behavior for the person who initiates the alternative application, it is stated that the time period and the positive results of the application trigger the forgetting of the old by those who follow it.

Furthermore, the study clearly confirms that forgetting can be managed with some strategies. Principals' stances, organizational routines, physical space, government policies, social media, environmental support, and communication skills are the structures involved in the process. These findings support studies of Martin de Holan (2011), Mehrizi et al. (2009), Tsang and Zahra (2008), and

Williams (2015). Martin de Holan identifies different vehicles contributing to intentional forgetting: a. assets, b. routines, c. structure, and d. understanding. School principals' stance and guidance facilitate the formation of new routines that offer collective understanding. They make physical arrangements within the school. In addition, as Tsang and Zahra (2008) and Wang et al. (2019) mention, routine-oriented approaches have been observed during the interviews. They provide rational explanations for the change (Mehrizi et al., 2009). Williams unveils the strategies of principals to form an unlearning culture. He remarks on setting appropriate conditions, determining potential effects such as security and age, offering effective communication routes, and establishing a trusty space.

The study by Cegarra-Navarro et al. (2012) proposes that creating an unlearning organization is crucial for replacing outdated knowledge with newly innovated knowledge. This process underperforms because members of the organization are unable to identify the threats they face or respond effectively to the need for change, and they lack the ability to manage the tensions between learning and experimenting with new techniques and adhering to established beliefs. The current study suggests that changes in school profiles and social developments prompt school leaders to reconsider or revise their preconceptions, and this relationship between organizational change and forgetting has been supported by JenaAbadi and Rakani (2014).

Toosi and Zahed Babelan's (2016) findings suggest that organizational silence and forgetting can contribute to resistance to change. Both dimensions of organizational forgetting have equally explanatory power to justify the resistance. As the present study points out, the managerial perspective has a greater influence on predicting resistance to change. Additionally, resistance to change is impacted by organizational silence and the mediating role of accidental organizational forgetting (Toosi et al., 2020).

Lastly, it is clearly supported that organizational forgetting results in both positive and negative consequences. It indicates that the function of knowledge and mode of forgetting impact the consequences (Azmi, 2008; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011; Martin de Holan and Phillips, 2004). However, the majority of mentions are of positive outcomes. According to Uğurlu et al. (2020), there are three primary advantages: it stimulates organizational change, promotes flexibility and the organization's capacity to adapt, and adds to creative and dynamic qualities.

By altering old habits, unlearning improves strategic flexibility (Wang et al., 2019). Similarly, JenaAbadi and Salmanzadeh's (2014) study indicates a substantial association between organizational forgetting and the components of organizational intelligence, except for the moral component. The present study provides additional evidence that, in a knowledge-structured organization, positive organizational forgetting (Aydin & Gormus, 2015) occurs in schools, and unlearning is the most commonly encountered form of forgetting (Lowrance, 2017).

The education system, considered the primary source of knowledge, encounters daily changes that lead to obsolescence and erosion of knowledge, skills, and specialized expertise. Consequently, the education system needs to align its quality and identity with environmental changes to meet the organization's needs. Schools are not immune to these changes and must respond and adapt accordingly because they play a critical role in shaping the future of society. However, some existing knowledge and beliefs can hinder the adoption of newly innovated knowledge (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011; Ozdogru et al., 2025; Starbuck, 2017). As cited by school principals in the study, teachers with 20-25 years of experience oppose the newly innovated knowledge, which may be derived from conflicting old beliefs. For example, technology-driven applications are gaining importance in educational institutions. It changes the way school actors direct students. Therefore, there needs to be some changes in teachers' assumptions of students. In other words, organizational forgetting is as important as learning since forgetting is a prerequisite for learning (Cegarra-Navarro & Wensley,

2019; Eryılmaz, 2016; Karakose et al., 2025b). Especially, intentional forgetting forms have a strategic function of management for organizational change (Martin de Holan, 2011), innovation management (Ayduğ & Ağaoğlu, 2023; Karakose & Tulubas, 2025), and organizational agility (Eydi et al., 2018; Fotovat, 2018; Ghasemi, 2015; Kavosi et al., 2021).

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

The current study aimed to investigate the forgetting phenomenon from multidimensional perspectives in educational settings. The findings revealed that forgetting occurs for various reasons and can involve both conscious and unconscious processes. The participants stated that this process is manageable and that elements such as the attitudes of school administrators, organizational routines, and communication styles are effective in the management. Besides, it was revealed that organizational forgetting produces both positive (renewal, flexibility) and negative (loss of knowledge, repeated errors) results.

It was revealed that frequent teacher turnover, especially in schools where substitute teachers are assigned on an hourly basis, causes difficulties in transferring and preserving institutional knowledge. The situation makes the effects of organizational forgetting more observable and stresses the practical importance of the study. In this context, the study emphasizes that forgetting is not only a loss but also a strategic process. Hence, there is a timely need to examine the forgetting process and prevent any knowledge losses.

It is recommended that policymakers and school principals who consider the newly innovated knowledge or practice should rethink its user-friendliness and explain the rationale in a detailed way while modeling it. Future researchers could investigate the impact of forgetting in educational institutions with high teacher turnover rates, especially to uncover its effect on accidental forgetting.

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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