

Assessment of an Educational Policy Decision Based on Teacher Views on Inspection

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Abstract

This study intended to identify teacher views on lesson inspection and assess the decision taken by the Ministry of Education on lesson inspection based on the findings. Research data were collected from 21 teachers studying for their master degrees in distant education classroom teaching program in Amasya University Social Sciences Institute in the fall semester of 2013-2014 academic year. The prominent view based on study findings showed that teachers believed inspection may be effective in teacher development; however current lesson inspection implementations in our country do not contribute to teacher development at all. Teacher views were found to focus mostly on the fact that inspection was undertaken via documents and judgmental perspectives of education supervisors towards teachers were more at the forefront during inspection. Educational policy decision made by the Ministry of Education pertaining to the abolishment of lesson inspections provided by education supervisors can be seen as an appropriate implementation.

Key Words: Inspection, inspector, educational policy, teacher, lesson inspection

1. Introduction

The goal of education and training activities, which have an immense role in social development, is to raise healthy and productive individuals in terms of knowledge, attitudes and values. Although all the factors included in the educational system are effective in achieving this goal; teachers, the implementers of the system, can be undoubtedly regarded as the most effective element during the process. This fact brings to the agenda inspection and guidance activities provided for teachers for professional support as well as pre-service and in-service training.

Educational inspection is an administrative process that involves implementations for intervention, amelioration and development in order to identify the current situation and satisfy the

needs to achieve the goals of education. In that sense; inspection is regarded as an administrative requirement as well (Oliva and Powels, 2001, p.39; Yıldırım, 2001, p.214). According to Daresh (2001; p.25) inspection is a dynamic process that leads to the development of all factors that affect education and training and according to Kliminister (2007) inspection is the provision of guidance and feedback in personal, professional and educational development areas. The real purpose of inspection is to increase teacher efficiency and consequently student achievement (Marshall, 2005). Based on the assumption that teachers may have different expectations and needs, inspection is also defined as teacher support in their professional development so that they can perform better (Burlington School District, 2007).

As a sub system of education, inspection aims to identify the level of realization and development of educational goals (Gökçe, 2004); to contribute to professional development of teachers, to guide teachers and ultimately to increased achievement levels in education (Erdem and Eroğlu, 2012). The dominant view in modern educational inspection is that inspection focuses on working with the supervisor rather than looking for deficits or supplementing the shortcomings. Working together with teachers points to professional guidance which is the focal point of modern inspection approach (Bilir, 2003).

It is necessary to stand by the teachers, who are responsible from managing the training and education process, and to support them in the activities to ensure quality education services (Cerit, 1996, p. 43). Therefore, education supervisors undertake inspection activities in education. While the responsibility of personal and professional development primarily depends on teachers' own efforts, education supervisors' efforts and support are also needed since they are responsible from training and development of teachers (Sağlam, 1975, p. 10). Education supervisors who have various roles in the education system such as administration, leadership, guidance, instruction, research and investigation are expected to contribute to individuals in several areas such as adapting to their environments, learning about and accept themselves, solving problems, overcoming deficiencies, being motivated and feeling successful and happy as well as developing themselves (Taymaz, 2005, p. 94).

The most important goal in supporting and inspecting teachers is to increase the quality of education and training provided in the classroom, in other words, to have all students learn. In this respect, inspection activities that are seen as a part of professional and career development are regarded as a guidance centered process that periodically continue to support development, provide feedback and increase knowledge and skills (Başaran, 1993; Eren, 1993: 404; Bilen, 1996; Kart, 2009 EURYDICE, 2012). In summary, the purpose of teacher inspection is to improve teaching (Baffour-Awuah, 2011) and contribute to the realization of goals by schools (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1993).

Examination of literature shows that while issues such as content, structure, form, redefinition and responsible individuals are discussed, there is still hesitation regarding the need for and significance of inspection (Aydın, 1993; Başar, 1998; Beach, & Reinhartz, 2000; Beycioğlu, & Dönmez, 2009; Calabrese, & Zepeda, 1997; Can, 2004; Garubo, & Rothstein, 1998; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005; Hoy, & Forsyth, 1986; Pajak, 2010; Sergiovanni, & Starratt, 1993; Waite, 1995; Zepeda, 2006). Inspection is believed to be necessary to prevent deviations and

increase the quality of outputs. Educational inspection in Turkey is undertaken by inspectors in the Ministry of Education Guidance and Inspection Department in the central organization and by supervisors in the Educational Inspection Department in the provinces (MoNE). Methods and principles regarding the selection, assignments and training of inspectors and supervisors in the Ministry and in Provincial Directorates of National Education are regulated with bylaws and regulations (Official Gazette, 1993a; Official Gazette, 1993b; Official Gazette, 2011a). Some new aspects were introduced to the inspection system with the 2011 law regulations that included important changes in the structure of the Ministry (Official Gazette, 2011b). According to these, inspectors employed by the central organization are called inspectors within the Guidance and Inspection Department and are assigned with inspection, investigation and inquiries within the responsibility and authority of the Ministry following an approach based on prevention education and guidance. The supervisors who work in the provinces are responsible from guidance, on the job training, inspection, assessment, investigation, inquiry and research activities in all level and types of formal and informal educational institutions and in Provincial and District Directorates of National Education.

Supervisors are the main factors in the realization of expected outcomes in education and in the implementation of inspection elements to develop human resources. Supervisors have significant roles in educational institutions due to their roles in influencing and evaluating the educational system directly. However, studies in Turkey in the field often emphasized that this role was not effectively undertaken (Arabacı and Akar, 2010, p.80; Burgaz, 1995, p.129; Sarpkaya, 2004, p.116) and that the concept of inspection in Turkish educational system should be restructured. It has been emphasized that philosophical and structural changes are required regarding over 4000 education supervisors in the system beyond the recent superficial changes observed in the titles such as primary school inspectors, educational inspectors and educational supervisors (Aslanargun and Göksoy, 2013). Since 2011 some structural changes have been observed in the inspection system, primary and ministry inspectors have been combined under one roof and the decision was made by a new regulation in 2014 that lesson inspection would not be undertaken by inspectors but the school administrators (MoNE, 2014). In this context, the current study aimed to identify teachers' views on lesson inspection and associate the most recent decision of the Ministry of Education regarding lesson inspection with the results of the study.

2. Method

2.1. Study Design

This study intended to identify lesson teacher views on lesson inspection. The study composed of a group of teachers who were studying for post graduate degrees in classroom teaching department was a qualitative study which evaluated the written statements of teachers to open-ended questions. Qualitative studies are based on nonnumeric data such as words and pictures (Türkdoğan, 2014). Although researchers in qualitative studies also arrive at numeric outcomes that define "how much" and "how many", they aim to determine cause and effect such as how individuals interpret and how they make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2013). In this sense,

case study method- a qualitative research method- which provides in-depth information about one or more cases was utilized in the study.

2.2. Working Group

Working group of the study was composed of 30 teachers studying for their post graduate degrees without thesis via distance education in classroom teaching department of Amasya University Social Sciences Institute in 2012-2013 academic year. 70% of the students attending the program participated voluntarily in the study. 71% of the 21 participating teachers were males and 29% were females.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

Question form composed of one open-ended question was used to identify teacher views. Teachers were asked the following question: “*Do you believe lesson inspection is necessary? Why?*”. Teacher views were received in writing.

2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from the question form in the framework of the study were described in the context of the purpose of the study. Approximately 39 pages of data were obtained from teachers in writing. Content analysis was utilized to examine the data obtained from the teachers during data analysis process. At first, views of teacher candidates were read and the frequencies of common views were determined. Later, data were presented as in the sample below by providing sample sentences supported by direct quotations:

Sample: T24;M,35-3: “.....”. Teacher 8 (T8), M (gender: Male), 35 (page number), 3 (line in the page).

3. Findings

Findings regarding the views of participating teachers on lesson inspection are provided below.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentage values of teacher perceptions regarding lesson inspection

No	Teacher Views	f	%
1	Inspections are only done on documents and written paperwork	12	17.1
2	The fact that inspections are undertaken one or two times annually is insufficient to provide correct data	9	12.8
3	Supervisors bring negative approaches to the forefront while undertaking their duties	7	10
4	Inspections are not effective in motivating teachers	7	10
5	Inspections are undertaken in the form of pay offs or looking for faults	6	8.5
6	Most of the time, there is no relationship between the academic field of the supervisor who undertakes inspection and the lesson he/she inspects	5	7.1

7	There is no common process in lesson inspections	4	5.7
8	There is lack of communication on the part of supervisors to provide feedback to teachers following the inspection activity	4	5.7
9	Supervisors reflect their egos on the inspection process	3	4.2
10	Supervisors do not internalize/adopt the expressions they use to communicate during inspection	3	4.2
11	Inspections only identify teachers' shortcomings however they do not present solutions	3	4.2
12	Teachers should not be graded after inspections; they should be provided with feedback instead	3	4.2
13	Ideological preferences such as the union the teachers are involved in create bias	2	2.6
14	Inspection approach based on documentation causes teachers to give educational activities second place	1	1.4
15	Inspections decrease respect of teachers in the eyes of the students	1	1.4
TOTAL		70	100

Examination of teacher views on lesson inspection shows that inspection has an important role in education however the view is dominant that implementations in our country classically called inspection has no contribution to education and training. The common teacher beliefs on inspection focus on the following: inspections are done on paperwork and written documents (17.1%) and providing inspection once or twice a year will be insufficient to provide correct data to assess teacher performance (12.8%). Teacher 24 stated that: *"I am working my 12th year in this profession. I have experienced many inspections as a school principal, assistant principal and as a teacher. All inspections I have experienced are done via classical approach and only through documentation that the teacher or the administration should prepare. I received full grade when my paperwork was complete. The lessons I teach or my competence in the program were never evaluated in these inspections"* T24 (M,16-23-29). In this framework, teachers believed that inspection based on paperwork and documentation paved the way in giving educational activities second place (1.4%).

Some of the teacher views (17.1%) related to the activities of supervisors focused on supervisors' critical approaches during inspection. Some teachers (8.5%) thought that inspections had the perception that they were undertaken to question teachers or look for shortcomings. Teacher 4 (F, 16-20) shared her experiences in the following statement: *"Supervisors who come to our school criticize instead of providing guidance. They leave after telling us all the negative aspects. I work in a village school. They compare us with schools in city center and reprimand us before leaving"*.

One of the points most emphasized by teachers was the incompatibility between the supervisors' field and the field of the teachers being inspected.

Some of the teachers who stated their views in the study (5.7%) believed that there was a lack of common implementation among supervisors in terms of lesson inspection. T20 (F,13-20) who expressed her views in this issues stated that *“The fact that qualifications sought in inspections change from person to person creates chaos among teachers instead of making contributions. To give an example to this issue, some supervisors criticize teachers for hanging pictures, paper etc on the walls saying that it gives the classroom a disorganized look while some supervisors criticize teachers by not hanging anything on the walls saying that visuality is important, all the areas in the classroom is a lesson material and walls should be decorated with all sorts of materials. Therefore the criteria for teacher evaluation should be known beforehand and criteria that do not change from one person to the next should be used”*. In the same issue, T13 (M, 16-19) stated that *“We observe different assessments using different criteria for teachers who are being inspected at the same time at the same class level. I can also express that I feel completely depressed when different supervisors ask for different things in the same classroom”*.

Another issue emphasized by the teachers was related to the quality of communication between teachers and supervisors. Teachers especially pointed to the problems experienced in this regard. Some teachers (5.7%) stated that supervisors had communication problems in providing feedback following inspection and some teachers (4.2%) believed that supervisors did not really internalize the expressions they used during inspection. Teacher 7(F, 10-16) focused on the sensitive areas that needed to be taken into consideration during interactions with the supervisors stating that *“Supervisor should be qualified and better equipped to support teachers in order to increase the quality of inspection. Positive and negative aspects that are being observed can be shared without offending teachers. Focusing only on negative aspects without mentioning the positive sides may lead teachers to failure. Supporting positive aspects observed in teachers will give them the satisfaction of success and increase motivation”*. It was stated that behaviors that were not regularly displayed by teachers were common in the scenarios experienced during inspections. Teacher 19 (M, 16-19) stated that *“Criticisms are provided and enforcements and fears are created rather than guidance and this fact negatively shapes teacher views. When inspections are provided in this manner, just like in a sham fight, teachers behave in the manner that is required by the supervisors instead of being themselves. They prepare all required paperwork before the inspection which creates formalism”*. A similar view in the same issue was reported by Teacher 3 (M5, 1-6) who stated that *“When the education supervisors come to the school for inspection they stay one or two days. It is an advantage for teachers who are not conducting their duties professionally. When this one or two-day period is over somehow, everything returns to normal. And these colleagues continue to teach using their previous habits”*.

Expectations of teachers from inspection (4.2%) focus on inspection which does not only identify shortcomings but provide solutions and on provision of feedback in terms of observable behaviors instead of solely grading teachers (4.2%). Another view presented by teachers in the study (2.1%) was related to the fact that ideological preferences such as unions created bias in teacher evaluation. Few of the teachers (1.4%) stated that inspections decreased the respect of teachers in the eyes of the students.

4. Discussion

When teacher views on lesson inspection are summarized, teachers are found to agree in high ratios that lesson inspections undertaken by education supervisors in our country using the current approach are not effective on teacher development. Teachers especially think that the inspection activity undertaken in such short periods of time is not sufficient to evaluate their actual performances and their teaching qualifications. Gündüz's (2010) study also found high number of teachers and administrators believed that education supervisors mostly focused on documentation rather than education and training ($\bar{x}=3.574$) and they did not believe they were evaluated by the supervisors objectively ($\bar{x}=2.964$).

On the other hand, teachers believe that there is an uncertainty as to what the grades they were given after inspection mean in terms of their teaching performances. It was identified that teachers mostly reported negative aspects of inspection regarding inspection implementations. In the study that focused on the metaphorical perceptions of teachers related to the concept of supervisors in primary schools, Töremen and Döş (2009) identified seventy six negative, twenty both negative and positive and only twelve positive metaphors. These results support the findings of the current study.

Teachers expressed that supervisors mostly focused on the negative aspects of the process regarding the management of education and training and had a critical discourse. This is believed to have negative effects on teachers and decrease their motivation. Contrary to these findings, Erdem and Eroğul (2012)'s results contradict the findings of the current study. The researchers attempted to identify classroom teachers' views on supervisors' attitude towards teachers during lesson inspection and found that classroom teachers had positive attitudes although they presented "agreement" in the scale for the dimension "education supervisors' attitudes towards teachers during lesson inspection".

Another important finding in the study is related to communication style between education supervisors and teachers. When sentences that start with "but, however, although" are formed during feedback, the previous positive sentences were found to lose their impact and create mentally negative thoughts. The belief that inspections are done critically and to look for shortcomings may have resulted from the communication style adopted by the supervisors. According to this, teachers believe that creating the message that their efforts are appreciated by focusing on positive aspects and practices will motivate them to a higher extent.

When research results are evaluated in general, it can be claimed that teachers have a negative perception during the inspection activities undertaken in the educational process. Research results are parallel to the results of similar studies in the literature (Aslanargun and Göksoy (2013), Badavan (1994), Karakuş and Yasan(2013), Kurnaz (2002), Kavas (2005), Lillis (1992), Töremen and Döş, 2009; Gündüz, 2010, Yavuz and Yıldırım (2009), Yaman (2009)). Results of literature survey and related research point to the need for restructuring inspection approaches in the Turkish Education System. It is apparent that philosophical and structural changes are required regarding over 4000 education supervisors in the system beyond the recent superficial changes observed in the titles such as primary school inspectors, educational inspectors and educational supervisors (Aslanargun and Göksoy, 2013). In line with these views, it is observed that the decision of the

Ministry of Education that duties related to lesson inspection which were generating negative feelings - that were presented in the sentence “supervisors are coming” - should be taken from the supervisors and left to school principals is a sound decision to meet the expectations reported by the teachers. The purpose of inspection is to remove shortcomings in the system, correct mistakes and facilitate the progress of the system to a further point. Hence, improvement and development are the key words in inspection. However, elements of identifying the situation and evaluation are the pre-conditions of improvement and development. In this case, it is believed that providing lesson inspection via principals who are present throughout the teaching process with opportunities to observe the whole process is more effective compared to inspection provided by supervisors who have the chance to observe the process only once or twice a year. Also, this practice will activate the continuity and integrity principles of inspection. However, it is also believed that relationships between the teachers and the principals may negatively affect the implementation of objectivity principle from time to time. As a matter of fact, study by Aslanargun and Göksoy (2013) showed that teachers had concerns about the objectivity of administrators during inspection provided by school administration. In this context, the following suggestions can be provided in the framework of research results and the new regulations brought to inspection system by the Ministry of National Education;

It is necessary to organize trainings for school administrators in topics such as inspection, process of inspection, elements and principles of inspection and lesson inspection and clarify school principals' authority and responsibilities in lesson inspection, Professional guidance and support dimensions are the most specifically emphasized dimensions of inspection in education. School principals should be supported in this regard to ensure professional guidance and support for teachers and provided with a specific training in this regard.

This study is a deduction based on teacher views on implementations of inspectors and supervisors. Therefore, new research that will include interviews regarding the new practice can be planned as well.

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