School administrators’ opinions about competencies of inspectors of primary school

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Abstract

It seems significant for proper operation of control system to determine primary school administrators’ opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary schools who supervise them. The purpose of this study is to determine school administrators’ opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school. The population of the study consists of school administrators in official primary schools in Tokat during the school year 2007-2008. 131 primary schools and 390 school administrators were determined through cluster sampling, 229 of school administrators participated in the study and 143 of them expressed their opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school. The study used case study, one of qualitative research models, and data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. School administrators’ opinions about the competencies of inspectors of primary school were arranged in themes. In addition, the opinions were coded in accordance with their owners and their frequencies were calculated. It has been concluded that school administrators’ opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors are counseling-oriented rather than being control-based and they are mostly towards developing in-service educational activities. In accordance with these conclusions, it has been recommended that competency-based programs should be prioritized in inspectors’ in-service educational activities, and activities should be arranged in order to develop their humanistic abilities as well as the knowledge about regulations.

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1. Introduction

21\textsuperscript{st} century is an age which is expressed with terms such as modern information age and space age. In this age which cannot be defined with only one single description, each concept and phenomenon is developing rapidly and disciplines which do not renew themselves are pushed out of the system. It is seen that nations defined as developed take heart from a development and efficiency-based updating point of their educational systems. Control (inspection system), whose necessity cannot be denied, is what they use for determining how much efficient and effective the operation of educational system is.
The research determined that in recent years there has been a shift in inspectors’ (supervisors’) roles from being control-based to counseling and on-the-job help-based (Haris 1976, Atay 1995). With the positive development of counseling approaches, the roles in accordance with traditional sense of counseling, which tends to determine and solve only an existing problem, have been replaced by roles in accordance with developmental counseling, which is centered on being democratic and participative. Turan (2005) notes that in current system the inspecting authorities base their roles regarding counseling and inspection on quantity rather than quality; that they tend to prefer conjectural solutions rather than determining the source of problems; that hence they somewhat secure the continuation of existing situation and this cannot provide the required contribution to achievement, development, quality and efficiency of education. However, the sub-system of education also has to achieve metamorphosis and development.

Inspection is to determine the situation to be inspected out and out and as it is as if taking a photograph; to evaluate and compare it with required and possible standards; to fill in the existing gaps; to replace the wrong things with true ones; to get rid of unnecessary burdens and to develop it as better situations (Basar 1998). Cengiz (1992:14) states that inspection is a “mission” on its own; that those who carry out this occupation should be grown-up in humanistic manner and have understanding, consideration, mental ability, high sense of profession, interest, aspiration, self-sacrifice, enthusiasm for duty, love and respect for profession and commitment. He goes and argues that inspectors, in terms of technical requirements of the profession, should have a mastership in content knowledge, excellence with pedagogic formation, managerial experience as well as complete theoretical knowledge about administrative sciences, a high general culture as a necessity of their profession and competence in law, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, Turkish Language and History in accordance with diversity of their profession.

Educational efficiency and productivity can be increased by inspection system, one of the most important sub-systems of educational system and system can control itself. It enables one not only to determine to what extent the existing operation complies with the regulations but also the compatibility of educational system with modern necessities is raised (Yildirim 2006). In this respect, the purpose of inspection is to identify the defects with the aim of correcting and prevent them from happening once again. Inspection makes it necessary to take required correcting precautions (Tortop 1990, cited in Tanriveren 2000). However, the purpose of inspection should not prioritize to see/show the faults, defects and errors of employees. Of course, the employees will be provided with the opportunity of recognizing their own incompetency. Yet, the underlying purpose behind this should be to develop the teacher and therefore teaching-learning process (Koklu 1996). Bradley and Kottler (2000) state that the primary objective of inspection is to ensure personal and professional development of those who are inspected and secondary goal of inspection is to develop the competencies of those who are inspected and make them acquire the necessary development, performance and skills. Unfortunately, this secondary objective has been mostly about the educational status of those who are inspected. The reason for this is that inspectors have been reluctant to assume the responsibility of developing the competencies of those who are inspected.

Supervisors play an important role in ensuring a proper understanding and interpretation of the goal of school system to which they are commissioned. In order to play this role effectively, firstly the supervisor has to properly understand and interpret the goal of school system himself/herself. This requires certain amount of competency (Aydin 2007:22). Also, carrying out the functions and powers of inspectors of primary school, defined as “counseling and on-the-job development, inspection and evaluation, investigation, inquiry and inquisition” (MEB 2008) requires certain level of competency.

The concept “competency” emphasizes on the competency required to carry out a certain task and role at an acceptable level (Sahin 2004). Within this context, it is highly important to emphasize it as the competencies expected from inspectors rather than as competencies which inspectors can have, and to describe with the term “competency”. Capacity is generally reflected in definition as playing one’s roles at an expected quality and quantity.

Development and activation of school administrators who play critical roles in educational systems is expected from control system and thus from inspectors who run this system. The inspector who is burdened with such a heavy responsibility by the educational system can fulfill this goal only through necessary competencies (Demir 2000). Inspection, counseling, investigation and inquiry are works which require mastership. From that point of view, inspecting person is owner of a professional occupation. Just as being a teacher requires mastership, being an inspector of primary school requires a different kind of mastership. For that reason, it has been regarded as a career profession and therefore included in group of career profession (which one can attain by passing a competency examination with a special competitive examination (Bozkurt and Karabiyik). As is the case for all occupations which are accepted as mastership, the profession of being an inspector has also certain defined and objectified
criteria and competencies.

If the number of incompetence people increases within an organization, then organizational operations will overlap with objectives at a lower level. Such situations pave the way for the destruction of that organization unless other variables enable it to survive (Basar 1998: 67). For that reason, there has arisen the need for evaluating the competencies of inspectors (Getz 1999). The fact that individuals within an educational institution fulfill the organizational objectives in different ways does not serve for the objective of organization as a whole but disrupts it. An inspector should center these different practices on one single goal.

Taymaz (2995: 51) points out that it is impossible to determine and limit the qualifications expected from an inspector definitely; that it is highly difficult to set criteria for required qualifications and that the framework drawn will generally constitute the framework for competencies of inspectors. Haynes (2003 cited in White 2008) listed the competencies of inspectors as updating their knowledge level by participating in educational activities and seminars; having the necessary mastership training and experience; listening well; determining the limits; providing constructive feedback and cooperating with others; recognizing that the inspection is a process and a relation between the inspector and inspected, and the necessity of accommodation in some cases; having the competency and flexibility to assume different roles and responsibilities during inspection, wide knowledge of regulations required during inquisitions and moral composition, the capacity to monitor the situation which is the first element of inspection and providing a situation assessment and feedback, the skill to supply the documents precisely on time; reinforcing the persons inspected and developing the problem-solving skills required following the inspection. The most important one of these competencies is to reinforce the persons inspected. This reinforcement will positively affect the requirement of an inspector towards controlling and his/her instinct to recognize the mistakes. Basar (1998:69) categorizes the competencies of an inspector under three headings: technical as an expert, humanistic as an officer within a predominantly humanistic system and as an individual who finds solutions and evaluates the problems.

The competency to make decisions is the process of designing the operations to attain the goals, finding solutions for the problems encountered and reaching a conclusion about the degree of attaining the goals after the activities. The competency to make decisions is also called as conceptual and administrative competency. The competency to make decisions does not only include the stage till the decision-making but also the stages in which the decisions are put into practice, monitored and evaluated together with its outcomes (Taymaz 2005: 49). In addition to their administrative roles, an inspector is also an expert and must have the technical competencies within their specialty at a topmost level. All technical knowledge and skills regarding the methods, techniques, processes and operations to be used in order to meet the requirements of the task constitute the technical activities of that task (Basar 1998: 70). The qualifications that are considered humanistic are, on the other hand, treating the human beings as human beings and acting in accordance with that perspective, understanding and activating other people, the skill to cooperate and listen effectively, envisaging the outcomes of behaviors, not doing the things that they would dislike (Bayrak 1998:101).

If people within a school or another kind of organization have these three kinds of competencies, the efficiency of organization will be able to increase. When an organization is competence; and cooperation and sharing develops among members; and it is sensitive to effective use of resources, the efficiency of that organization, that is achievement of required objectives, will have been ensured (Bayrak 1998: 101).

2. Methodology

It is thought that it will be useful to identify the competencies of inspectors of primary school in accordance with school administrators who get service from educational control system so as to determine and develop the efficiency of both control system and educational system. A review of related literature will suggest that there are studies on finding out the competencies expected form an inspector and on comparing the exhibited competencies with ideal ones (Atay 1995; Demir 2000). It is thought that receiving school administrators’ opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school through this study is significant.

In this study, we used case study, one of quantitative research models. The population of the study consists of school administrators who work for official primary schools in Tokat during the school year 2007-2008. Among twelve districts within the boundaries of Tokay, five clusters were formed through cluster sampling in accordance with their socio-economic levels, cultural leveling status, geographical positions and demographical structures. There are 131 schools and 390 school administrators in the areas specified. 229 school administrators participated in the study and 143 of them (62%) expressed their opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary
school. Frequency and percentage distribution of school administrators were estimated regarding their age, gender, professional seniority, alma mater, educational background, experience in school administration and demographical data. School administrators' opinions were analyzed by means of descriptive analysis. The opinions were arranged thematically and were coded with their owners, and these codes were tabulated with their frequencies (f).

3. Findings

Considering the demographical characteristics of participants, it is clear that majority of school administrators (152, 66%) are between the age of 31 and 40; that great majority of them are male (96.1%); that school administrators who enjoy 6-10 years of seniority (around 25%) constitutes the majority when compared to others; that majority of school administrators are university graduate (180, 78.6%) and that majority of them (131, 57.2%) are a graduate of teachers college. Nearly half of school administrators have five-year or less experience in school administration (118, 51.5%); therefore they can be regarded as elementary in school administration.

School administrators' opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school are provided below in Table 1.

| Theme | School Administrators | f |
|-------|-----------------------|---|
| I don't want them to interfere with my job | A19 | 1 |
| I don’t want them to disgust and make themselves hated | A5, A1 | 2 |
| There is no need for them | A108, A85, A47 | 3 |
| They should not be controlling | A73, A71 | 2 |
| They should prioritize counseling | A221, A217, A155, A150, A140, A132, A131, A128, A123, A119, A110, A99, A91, A81, A78, A77, A73, A72, A60, A58, A43, A18, A13, A6 | 24 |
| They should not use their positions as an instrument of oppression | A29, A28, A24, A18 | 4 |
| They should not be looking for faults and mistakes | A217, A179, A177, A156, A127, A125, A89, A81, A61, A58, A43, A29, A28, A12, A4 | 15 |
| They should be objective in their approaches to people | A182, A159, A158, A143, A132, A120, A116, A114, A76, A50, A49, A44, A31, A30, A9, A5 | 16 |
| They should be fair | A178, A177, A173, A172, A171, A164, A149, A137, A125, A114, A51, A33, A30, A16 | 14 |
| They should be reliable | A159, A120, A33, A6 | 4 |
| They should be tolerant | A178, A171, A164, A162, A120, A53, A26 | 8 |
| They should show empathy | A229, A138, A123, A75, A68, A58, A32, A30, A21 | 9 |
| They should be warm-hearted | A218, A103, A70, A61, A44 | 5 |
| They should make constructive criticism. | A216, A214, A172, A165, A158, A140, A137, A117, A115, A109, A106, A100, A85, A61, A59, A53, A45, A44, A25, A13 | 20 |
| They should be open-minded | A160, A81 | 2 |
| They should be able to distinguish between ulterior motive and good will. | A149, A125, A94 | 3 |
| They should be sharing | A160, A128, A79, A44 | 4 |
| They should not overwhelm the employees with bureaucracy | A225, A175, A166, A133 | 4 |
| They should well come to school for visiting instead of inspection | A70 | 1 |
| They should not be opportunist | A18 | 1 |
| They should be consistent | A139, A138, A128, A73, A69, A68, A45, A25, A16 | 9 |
| They should reach a consensus among themselves for their practices | A154, A151, A112, A94, A87, A11 | 6 |
| They should be learning leaders. | A164, A104, A77, A61 | 4 |
| They should develop their humanistic characteristics | A89, A77, A34 | 3 |
| They should be creative | A201, A173, A153 | 3 |
(Continued from Table 1)

| Theme                                                               | School Administrators | f  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| They should convey positive suggestions to their seniors           | A166, A156            | 2  |
| They should use initiative                                          | A114                  | 1  |
| They should internalize their competencies                          | A182, A180, A172, A138, A53, A43, A18 | 7  |
| They should accept that others may know better                      | A1, A175, A118, A94   | 4  |
| They should assume a catalyst role                                  | A113, A74             | 2  |
| They should use their discretionary power                          | A166, A152, A95, A50, A44, A29, A4 | 7  |
| They should make use of their previous experiences in being a teacher | A223, A139, A69, A68, A27 | 5  |
| Before they inspect a school, they should explore the student characteristics, environmental conditions of that school, and they take these into account. | A223, A177, A170, A165, A158, A157, A150, A115, A112, A100, A99, A94, A75, A73, A72, A59, A58, A35, A13 | 19 |
| When they ask a question, they should listen to the answer.        | A175, A98, A87        | 3  |
| They should be model.                                               | A166, A114, A91, A59, A34, A24, A20 | 7  |
| They should be selected from administrative and inspective spheres. | A69, A49              | 2  |
| They should act in accordance with scientific methods and approaches during inspection and inspect only the school administration. | A69, A58, A48, A46, A30, A20 | 6  |

When we look into Table 1, we can see that the opinion most frequently expressed by school administrators regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school is the one which emphasizes the inspectors of primary school should prioritize counseling. This finding may be considered as being parallel with the recent shift in inspectors' roles from being control-based to counseling and on-the-job help-based (Haris 1976, Atay 1995). It has been observed that most of the school administrators' opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school center on "the humanistic competencies of inspectors of primary school". It can be argued that the themes such as not being controlling, oppressive, seeking for faults and mistakes, opportunist; being objective, reliable, open-minded, tolerant, sharing, consistent, creative, model, well-intentioned, warm-hearted; showing empathy; making constructive criticism; being able to come to school also for purposes of visiting; developing humanistic characteristics; being able to use initiatives; accepting that others may know better; appreciating and listening to answers for questions are related to humanistic competencies of inspectors of primary school. This may have been resulted from the fact that school administrators have no problem with decisional and technical competencies of inspectors of primary school but find them insufficient in terms of humanistic competencies.

Other opinions on which school administrators lay emphasis on are "that inspectors of primary school should make constructive criticism; that they should take into account the student characteristics and environmental conditions of the school to which they have been commissioned; that they should be objective in their approaches to people; that they should not be seeking for faults and that they should be fair" respectively. School administrators stated that inspectors of primary school should have counseling and leading identity rather than seeking for faults and mistakes. Other opinions frequently expressed are that they should approach to school and students unprejudiced and that the conditions surrounding the school and students should be taken into account during the process of inspection.

According to Table 1, it is an interesting finding that the school administrators' opinion "inspectors of primary school should be selected from administrative and inspective spheres" has been expressed at a low level. That the school administrators have not laid a great emphasis on the source from which the inspectors of primary school are selected can be accounted for the fact that the source from which the inspectors of primary school are selected is not so important for school administrators but humanistic competencies are prioritized by them.

One of the school administrators remarked that "there is no need for them". Three of them, on the other hand, expressed their opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school as "I do not want them to interfere with my job; and I do not want them to disgust and make themselves hated". These opinions gives rise to the thought that inspectors of primary school do not contribute to the school administrators but interrupt the operation of school administration.

4. Discussion

According to the results of the study, school administrators' opinions about the competencies of inspectors of primary school tend to be counseling-oriented rather than control-based. A need has arisen for the development of
humanistic competencies of inspectors of primary school as well as their technical and decisional competencies. Since school administrators' opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors of primary school are directed towards "treating human beings as human beings, understanding others, showing empathy, listening effectively, not doing the things that they would dislike, and approaching tolerantly", we can say that most of the opinions are related to humanistic competencies. That is, school administrators attach importance to humanistic competencies of inspectors of primary school as well as their decisional and technical competencies and even they lay great emphasis on this opinion. School administrators expect the inspection to prioritize counseling and to move away from being controlling, seeking for faults and mistakes. Also, they want the inspectors of primary school to establish an effective communication with them; to show empathy; to approach them tolerantly; to understand them and to cooperate with them.

As a result of the study, we can recommend that competency-based programs should be prioritized in in-service educational activities of inspectors of primary school and these programs should be enriched and that activities should be planned to develop humanistic competencies of inspectors of primary school as well as their knowledge about regulations. Also, we can suggest that a similar research could be carried out with inspectors of primary school and secondary school administrators and that such a research could determine opinions of inspectors of primary school about themselves and secondary school administrators' opinions regarding the competencies of inspectors.

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