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Tuncay Yavuz Ozdemir and Ramazan Yirci

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Tuncay Yavuz Ozdemir, Firat University, Turkey. (e-mail: tyozdemir@gmail.com)

Ramazan Yirci, Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University, Turkey. (e-mail: ryirci@gmail.com)

A Situational Analysis of Educational Supervision in the Turkish Educational System

TUNCAY YAVUZ OZDEMIR and RAMAZAN YIRCI

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conduct a situational analysis on the educational supervisions carried out within the Turkish educational system. Content analysis was used in this study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. An interview form was prepared by the researchers in accordance with the study purpose and expert opinion sought to ensure content and face validity. Findings of the study show that; supervision is necessary for an increase in educational quality, sustainability of educational worker development, determination and elimination of possible deficiencies, to ensure not falling behind developments in the educational system, and to collaborate within the school. It has been determined that the agents who carry out the supervision should have professional competencies, should be able to enter into effective communication, should be able to spare enough time for supervision and follow the principles of equality. In addition, the importance of effective and sufficient guidance and parental participation was highlighted. In a change to the Turkish educational system in 2014, the authority and responsibility of supervision was assigned to the school principals. Because it would decrease the psychological pressure that supervision imposes on educational workers, and enable a positive atmosphere for communication over a prolonged period, this change was believed to be beneficial overall. According to another standpoint, because school principals lack professional competencies regarding educational supervision and do not follow the principles of equality, this change instead was believed to be unfavorable.

Keywords: educational supervision, supervision, inspector, effective supervision.



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Introduction

Schools have a significant influence on the growth and development of the community. By providing teaching activities to students according to curriculums prepared beforehand based on the needs of the society and the individual, desired behavior changes can be instilled on students (Erden, 2004, p.50). Providing a more habitable community and the required skilled workforce is the centric role of schools. For schools to carry out and not to diverge from these goals they should be administered and supervised effectively (Gokalp, 2010). The prerequisite for utilizing organizational sources effectively and productively and ensuring organizational sustainability is supervision (Katz & Khan, 2013). Supervision is an organizational obligation for determining the level of achieving organizational goals. Thus, supervision is a process which determines the effectiveness of school activities and whether or not there are any divergences from the aims of the educational system (Aydin, 1998; Bursalioglu, 2003; Basaran, 2000; EARGED, 2002). It is crucial for this process to be dynamic and open to change. Supervision is an educational sub-system that guides and counsels the professional development of teachers and offers effective support for educational workers in order for them to achieve their goals (Munemo & Tom, 2013). It is furnished with control, guidance and communication instruments which promote an education-training standard in schools (Obiweluozor, Momoh, & Ogbonnaya, 2013).

Change, which has occurred in all areas, has taken the term supervision into a whole new dimension. Supervision used to be carried out in order to eliminate present or possible failures in the educational system, determine whether educational workers are mastering their professional duties and responsibilities, and to prevent educational workers to do wrong (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). However, based on the changes and developments in the sense of administration, supervision is defined today as an educational sub-system that focuses on improving the process, prioritizing a huge amount of partner engagement and that underlines the strong cooperation between the supervisor and the supervised (Memduhoglu, 2012). Thus, the supervision system can be said to be focused on contributing to educational workers' professional development (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007), evaluating student success and teacher performance, and improving education overall (Pajak, 2010). Based on the change in the function of supervision, the role of the supervisor has also changed (Walker & Dimmock, 2005). Educational supervisors now have to increase educational quality and contribute to the professional development of educational workers (McNicol, 2004). It can be said that educational supervisors can be rated on how they perform their duties and responsibilities based on the effectiveness of their supervision. Effectiveness of the educational system is possible through effective supervision (Allemann, 2006; Kovats, 2006). Supervision is important in that it evaluates the quality and standards of education and it also promotes school accountability towards the government, parents and taxpayers. But most importantly, supervision has the aim of increasing the standards of a school and achieving school development (Earley, 1998).

Effectiveness of the supervision depends on the trust, cooperation and atmosphere of positive communication between the supervisor and the supervised (Can, 2004) along with change management, cooperative learning and educational leadership (Daresh, 2001). Effectiveness of supervision depends on supervision workers' level of mastering roles such as management, leadership, guidance and research expertise (Taymaz, 1995). Similarly, the relationship between the supervisor and the supervised agents becomes a crucial element

for an effective supervision (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000; Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999). Sustainability of educational supervision, which is an important sub-system of the educational system, is ensured through legal documents. Educational supervision in the Turkish educational system is carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) under the Law on Unification of Education, Ministry of National Education Basic Law no. 1739, Ministry of Education Organization and Functions Law no. 3797, Decree Law no. 652, Primary and Education Law no. 222 and other special laws. Educational supervision in the Turkish educational system was assigned to the Presidency of The Supervision Board with the Ministry of National Education Organization and Functions Law no. 3797.

With the Regulations of MoNE Presidency of Guidance and Supervision and Presidency of Educational Supervisors, dated May 24, 2014, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which is the decision-making organ of the Turkish educational system, disentitled teacher-course inspection from the duties and authorities of inspectors and deputy inspectors and reassigned it to the duties and authorities of school principals (MoNE, 2014). Supervision of educational activities within the Turkish educational system therefore became assigned under the school principals' duties and authorities with this change. While educational supervisions were carried out by educational supervisors once every two years and for only one course, this change to regulation supervision is now to be carried out at least twice a year by the school principal. Thus, supervision is aimed at being more functional. The purpose of this study is to conduct a situational analysis on how educational supervision, which is one of the most effective factors in determining to what extent educational activities achieve their goals, is implemented in the Turkish educational system. The following research questions were asked in accordance with the purpose of this study:

- Should educational activities and extracurricular activities be supervised?
- What kinds of effects have the changes in the Regulations of MoNE Presidency of Guidance and Supervision and Presidency of Educational Supervisors caused in the educational system?
- What should be done to make educational supervision more effective?

Methodology

The qualitative research method aims at deeply examining an event within its own reality. According to Silverman (2004) qualitative studies direct the question "how" instead of "what". Qualitative research methods are used to determine what participants think about a specific issue in real life (Marvasti, 2004, p.7; Yin, 2010, p.8). For these reasons, the qualitative research method was applied in this study. The phenomenology design was adopted as it focuses on deeply examining the perceptions of individuals that they come across through their experiences (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011) and is located in the center of qualitative research methods (Mayring, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Because it enables a thorough investigation on qualitative data, the participants were selected by way of purposeful sampling. According to Maxwell (2005, p.88), the most important factor in determining the participants of a qualitative study is to select people who would give satisfying answers. The study group consisted of 24 teachers working in public schools. A literature review was conducted according to the aims of the study and an interview form consisting of three open ended questions was prepared by the researchers. Field experts

were consulted (n=3) in order to assure face validity of the interview form. Corrections that the field experts suggested for the interview form were applied in order to produce the final interview form.

Participant opinions were examined one by one for each question. Opinions which were not deemed satisfactory or carried no meaning were listed as invalid. Interview forms which were listed as valid were coded as “P1, P2, P3,..., P24” and their data entered to the computer. Content analyses were conducted in order to analyze the data. Similar statements were determined and grouped accordingly. For the reliability of the study, expert opinions were sought to in order to determine whether or not participant opinions correctly corresponded to the category in which they had been listed. With this respect, experts were asked to group all the participant opinions into the categories that the researchers determined. During this process, 14 out of 168 participant opinions were grouped under different categories by the experts. For the reliability of the data collected from the content analysis, the “Percentage of Agreement (P) = Consensus / (Consensus + Dissidence) x 100” formula, developed by Miles and Huberman (1984), was applied. Thus, the reliability ratio between the researchers was $P = 154 / (154 + 14) \times 100 = \sim 92\%$. There are different opinions stating that the percentage of agreement should be 70% (Miles & Huberman, 1984) or 90% (Saban, 2004) and above for the reliability of qualitative studies. According to either school of thought, these findings suggest that the reliability of the study is at a sufficient level.

Findings

All of the participants stated that in order to carry out education and training activities according to their aims, education and training activities and extracurricular activities should be supervised separately. Participant opinions concerning the reasons why supervision is necessary are displayed in Figure 1.

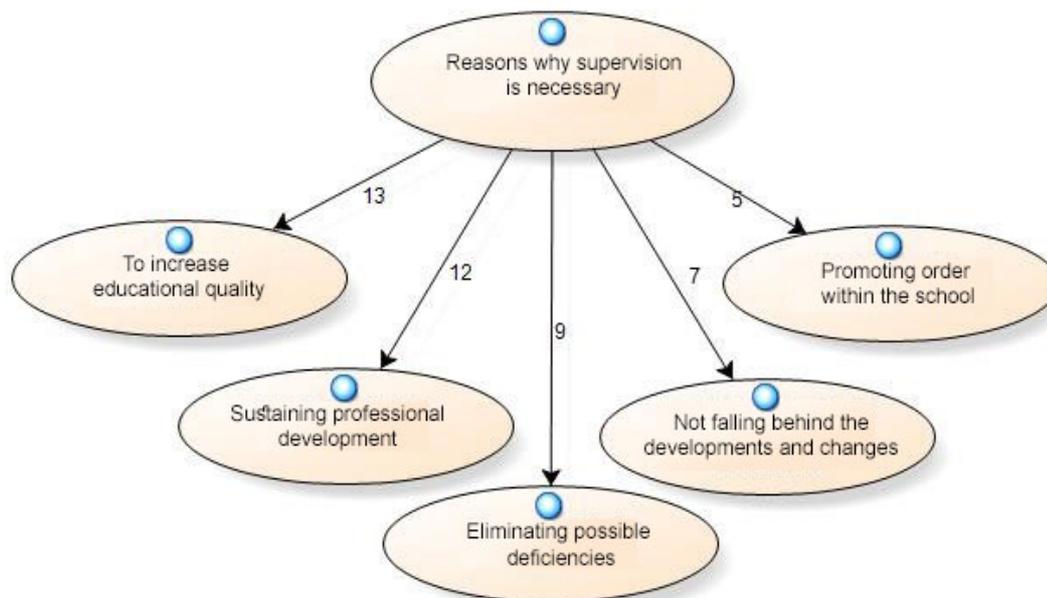


Figure 1. Reasons why supervision is necessary

Participants emphasized the importance of supervising education and training activities as well as extracurricular activities in order to provide a more habitable community and for

the training of the required skilled workforce. They stated that supervision is necessary for issues such as increasing educational quality, sustainability of work discipline, determining to what extent the curriculums achieve their goals, and determining and meeting the needs of present educational activities. They asserted that only this way would the human type that the educational system desires be raised and the productivity of educational practices increase. They stated that supervision is necessary for fully implementing the required tasks and operations on time, for eliminating possible errors and mistakes, and for setting an order within the school. Participants believed that supervision was necessary for the educational workers to adapt to the constantly and rapidly changing educational system. They expressed that with guidance and supervision, the professional development of teachers would be sustainable and that this would help the institution to become a learning organization. They stated that a positive and open-to-change atmosphere within schools would have a positive contribution on work satisfaction levels of the workers. One outstanding opinion was that through supervision, possible disorders, malfunctions and errors in documents can be corrected and the chaos atmosphere which can emerge within the organization can be prevented. Similarly, participants also stated that supervision is essential in the form of feedback concerning education-training activities. Some of the participant opinions like this are given below:

P4: The society we live which undergoes constant change. The MoNE makes changes in legal documents that are in line with the present change in the community. In order for teachers and school administrators to act accordingly with the changes in legal documents, education-training activities should be supervised. In addition, supervision is also crucial in solving problems that teachers encounter during practice as a result of these changes. This problem can be overcome through effective guidance provided by educational supervisors.

P12: An individual taken from society is delivered back to society after being subjected to various processes within the school. Supervision is necessary in order to promote the changes and developments expected in individuals who receive education at schools, according to specific purposes or to observe the level of these changes. Because teacher performance would increase with supervision, this would also contribute to the effectiveness of schools. In order to achieve the desired acquisitions for the individual through education, educational activities should be supervised along with training activities. Thus, school productivity will increase while the school maintains its purpose.

P15: Supervision is an implementation which facilitates solving problems that teachers encounter during education-training activities. Through effective guidance before the supervision, teachers would be ready for specific situations that they could encounter during the supervision. Guidance and supervision is crucial, specifically for teachers and also in general, for the system to rapidly adapt to the changes that occur in educational programs. Thus, on-the-job training and professional development that educational supervisors always talk about can be sustained in this way.

P18: The teaching profession is a profession in which there are no undo keys. Being concerned only about student learning during class would be the biggest mistake. Although the educational system wants it to be this way, it is essential to furnish the student with the values of the society he or she belongs to. In other words, the teacher has to be a role model even while out of the school. Creating a habitable community is possible only with education. We can observe to what extent these elements are realized only through supervision. Of

course, educational supervisors who come to inspect should have a similar sensitivity. Otherwise they would evaluate only to what extent students have learned the subjects, fill in the documents and the supervision would be completed. Such supervision cannot be regarded as actually achieving their goals.

Opinions concerning a more effective supervision are displayed in Figure 2.

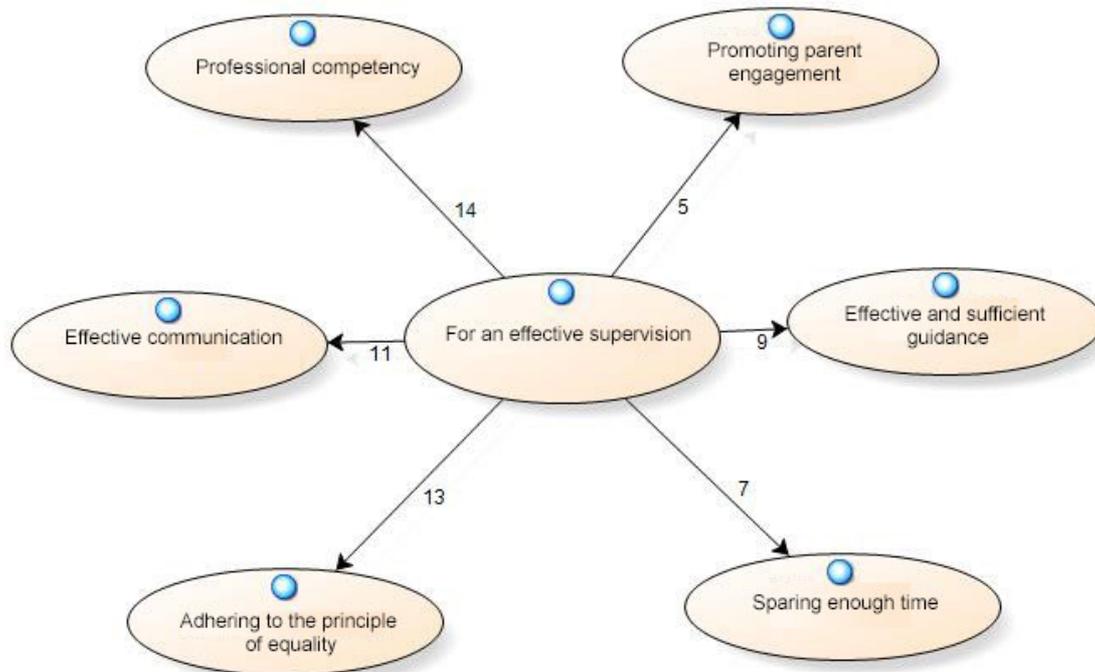


Figure 2. For an Effective Supervision

Participants underlined the following points in order for the supervision to achieve its mission. They initially stated that there should be an unconditional atmosphere of respect between the supervisor and the supervised agent. They underlined that by prioritizing guidance, a positive communication atmosphere with teachers without prejudgments is crucial for an effective supervision. They stated that guidance was the central element of educational supervision. They stated that when a sufficient amount of guidance is provided, job satisfaction of teachers would increase, a positive contribution to organizational commitment would take place and their professional motivation would increase. This would have a positive contribution to schools achieving their missions. Participants underlined that, for an effective communication it is necessary for educational supervisors to display constructive attitudes, especially during their interactions with teachers and to be distant to subjective behaviors. They put forward that many problems will be solved through an effective communication between educational supervisors and teachers. One of the outstanding opinions was that educational supervision should be carried out by people who have received its education. They stated that extracurricular activities bear the same importance as education-training activities. Participants stated that although the area of responsibility of educational supervisors increased with the changes in the job description, they continued on with guidance and supervision activities without receiving the education that became necessary after the changes in their duties and responsibilities. This was said to

hinder the effects that were expected from the supervision. At this point, as for teachers, it is crucial for educational supervisors to sustain their professional developments.

They suggested that one or two supervisions a years is not sufficient or effective, and that supervision should be carried out more frequently and over an extended period of time. Participants underlined that supervision should not be limited to only one course hour. Participants who emphasized the importance of parent engagement in achieving educational functions stated that supervision should not just involve document control. They stated that it is important to treat each supervised individual the same way and without compromising the principle of equality and justice for the effectiveness of supervision. They stated that individual differences such as gender and political view should be ignored. They emphasized the importance of taking ethical principles into consideration during supervisions. From a different point of view, some participants stated that supervision may not be objective due to the differences in the social and physical environments of schools. Thus, at this point, it is crucial for educational supervisors to be objective throughout the supervisions. It was stated that social activities other than education-training activities helped students to embrace their school, increased communication between the students and contributed to the personal development of students. Supervision of activities other than education-training activities was found to be crucial. Some of the outstanding opinions of educational workers regarding what kind of features that an educational supervision should carry are given below:

P2: In order to increase teacher motivation, it is crucial for educational supervisors not to display offending attitudes towards teachers and to refrain from being subjective during the supervisions. It is obviously not acceptable for educational supervisors to display offending attitudes towards us and insult us in front of our colleagues, school administrators or the students.

P5: A major role falls to educational supervisors for us to rapidly and correctly adapt to recent changes in the educational system and to become aware of the developments in professional teaching knowledge and in our own field. More stress should be put on guidance activities during the supervisions carried out by educational supervisors. The focus of the teaching profession is to shape the future generation. Thus, teachers should be aware of changes occurring in all areas. We need an accurate and sufficient guidance service to be able to generate new teaching methods, to eliminate weaknesses in classroom management and to promote a more effective training.

P8: Teachers with a post-graduate degree or who are receiving doctorate education are unfortunately supervised by educational supervisors with a bachelor's degree. It is important for educational supervisors, who are responsible for determining the extent which teachers master their duties and responsibilities, to have at least the same educational status with the teachers. One other issue that should be underlined is that only a limited number of educational supervisors can inspect teachers from all branches. No matter how experienced the educational supervisors, we can't expect them to have full knowledge about every field. But they should at least have expert knowledge about their own field.

P11: A teacher is evaluated according to only one or two course hours throughout the whole academic period. Just like alternative assessment methods have been developed because it is not right to evaluate students with a single exam carried out in a one hour

course, we should also consider multiple data sources in evaluating teachers as well. It isn't right to evaluate the whole academic period through only a one hour course. In addition, there is no time left to provide any sort of guidance service that the teachers require. It would be beneficial for the system to provide more time for educational supervisors to carry out inspection on various standpoints.

P14: Schools go on holiday due to heavy snow and parent's crowd into the school. They complain about what they could do about their child. In other words, parents perceive schools as places where their children stay away from home, but also feel safe. Parents who we don't see during the whole year start coming to school when the reports begin to be prepared. In short, parents don't come to school for their children's education. Parent engagement is crucial for education and training to be more effective. Although parent-teacher associations were established with this aim, they are rather distant from it. Maybe by giving a new shape to supervision can promote effective parent engagement. Because neither the school administration nor us, as teachers, can generate parent engagement.

P19: It is rather normal for each educational worker to have different political views, a different way of thinking and a different world of living. This goes the same for educational supervisors and teachers as well. Although this is regarded as a normal situation, educational supervisors can evaluate teachers according to criteria which is not in line with supervision principles, such as the union they belong to, their political view or gender. No matter what the conditions are, educational supervisors should not compromise the principle of equality and ethical principles and should remain objective.

With the changes made on May 24, 2014, supervision of education and training was disentitled from educational supervisors and assigned to school principals. How this change in the supervision system was perceived by the teachers was evaluated. Participants considered this change in two ways; positive and negative. The categories in which participant opinions were in favor of the change were grouped together, and are presented in Figure 3.

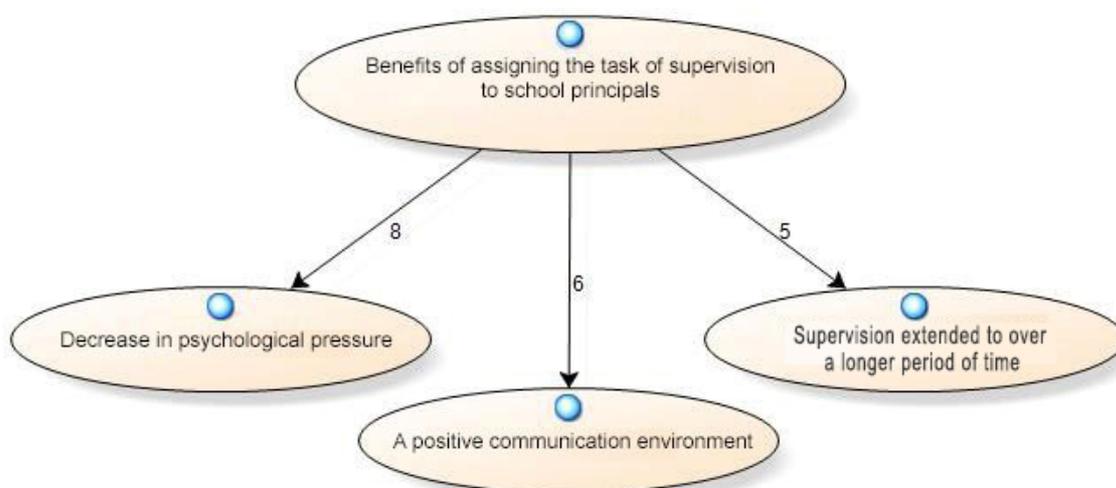


Figure 3. Benefits of Assigning the Task of Supervision to School Principals

They expressed that being inspected by the administrators of the institution they work for would decrease some of the pressure which supervision imposes on them. They stated

that this way they would teach the courses being supervised even better and productivity of those course would thereby increase. Teachers stated that the presence of an atmosphere of communication with the school principals made them feel better. This issue was regarded as an opportunity to eliminate communication obstacles that emerge during supervisions. Participants who criticized the fact that the supervisions carried out by educational supervisors are limited to a short period of time, found the change to be beneficial in that supervisions would be carried out over an extended period of time. Thus, they stated that it was important that the low level of teacher performance due to their mood during the supervision could be compensated for with further instances of supervision.

With a different viewpoint, some participants found this change to be negative for the supervision system. Categories in which these opinions were grouped as themes are shown in Figure 4.

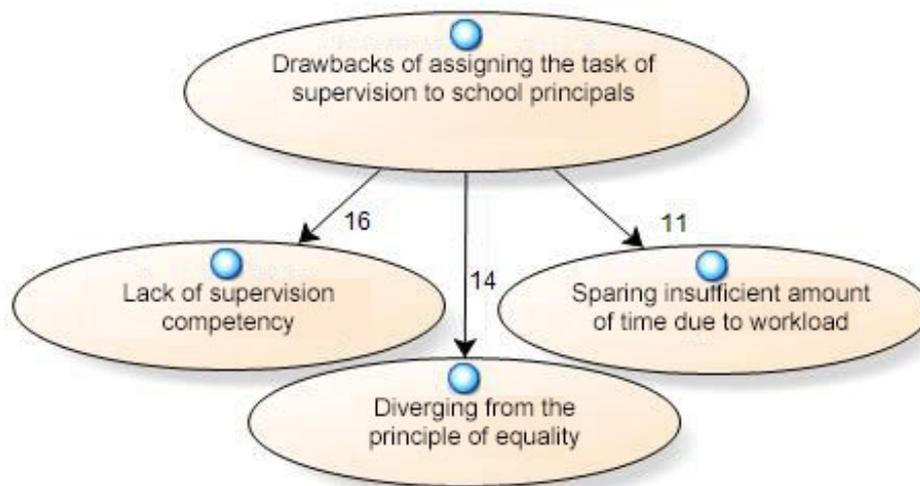


Figure 4. Drawbacks of Assigning the Task of Supervision to School Principals

While educational supervisors receive training in different fields, the fact that school principals lack some experience regarding educational supervision is seen as an important drawback. Participants claimed that inspections that have been or would be carried out by school principals, educational supervision would not be implemented in a comprehensive fashion. The fact that some school principals have been administrators for many years, and they have remained distant from the classroom setting, could be said to have a significant negative effect on this. Thus, it is possible that school principals would not succeed in supervising issues other than factors such as classroom order, classroom management and student behavior. Supervision of education and training activities in schools and all of the extracurricular activities is an essential obligation. The reason for this is because teachers educate students in various and extensive subjects such as behavior acquisition, along with teaching children the school subjects, gaining a personality, realizing the values of the society and many more.

The importance of carrying out supervision under the responsibility of competent agents for the implementation to process in a sound way was stressed. With the recent changes in the Turkish educational system regarding the appointment of administrators, school principals are believed to diverge from principles of ethics and impose pressure on

teachers through supervision. Favoring teachers that have close relationships with the principal is an issue that we have to take into consideration. Participants stated that similar cases could emerge in supervisions carried out by educational supervisors, but they could be more frequent in supervisions carried out by school principals. It was stated that, especially after the changes in the Turkish educational system regarding the appointment of administrators, variables shouldn't be included in the supervision process such as union membership of teachers, or their political views. Taking these into consideration can lead to problems. One other point that participants underlined regarded school principals not attaching much importance to supervision due to their own workload and not sparing much time for it. It was asserted that educational supervisors carried out supervision even though they lasted for just one hour course duration. It was emphasized that together with this change, supervision would not be effectively carried out in schools with many teachers because schools would not spare an excessive amount of time for guidance and supervision. With the regulation for the appointment of administrators, that was put into effect during the 2014-2015 academic period, many school principals were assigned to the position for the first time.

Participants stated that expecting recently assigned school principals to carry out both their administrative role and also as supervisor would not be very realistic. It was emphasized that because school principals work overtime to perform their present workloads, it would create a problem for the effectiveness of the inspection to assign them the task of supervision as well. This was interpreted as supervisions not being carried out or performed only superficially. Participants stated that while it would yield more accurate results for educational supervisors to carry out a branch-oriented supervision, the problem of branching out in educational supervision will continue to expand. Participants expressed that the desired personal and professional development would not be achieved with the supervision of education and training activities as supervision would not be implemented to a sufficient level.

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a situational analysis on educational supervision activities through the opinions of 24 teachers that participated in the study. Participant opinions suggested that along with the education and training activities carried out in schools, other activities should also be supervised. It is known that there are many negative opinions of teachers in the literature regarding supervision. For example, educational supervisors displaying unpleasant behaviors during the supervision (Kazak, 2013), a lack of standards for supervision implementations (Aksit, 2006), the anxiety that supervision causes teachers (Can, 2004), non-objective behaviors during supervision (Balci, Aydin, Yilmaz, Memduhoglu, & Apaydin, 2007), insufficient levels of guidance services (Taymaz, 2002; Zepada, 2006; Burlington School District, 2007; Memduhoglu & Zengin, 2012; Mehduhoglu & Taymur, 2014), low levels of professional competency of supervisors (Kudisch, Fortunato, & Smith, 2006) and many more can be listed. There are also significant participant opinions stating that supervision is necessary.

According to participant opinion, supervision is necessary for determining the extent to which educational goals are achieved, for determining and eliminating educational malfunctions and for increasing educational quality. A guidance-based supervision system is

essential for educational workers to rapidly adapt to the speedy changes occurring in the educational system, as well as technological and pedagogic changes. Concerning the findings of this study, Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (2007) stated that it is necessary for the sustainability of professional development and Marshall (2005), Baffour-Awuah (2011) and Ilgan (2008) stated that it is necessary for the effectiveness of education. Dongel (2006) simply stated that supervision is an essential obligation.

It was stated that in order to achieve the goals of supervision, inspections should be carried out by professionally competent agents by sparing enough time, by providing guidance services through effective communication and by taking the principle of equality into consideration. MacBeath (2006, p.7-8) states that the supervisor should behave in an open, honest and fair manner during the supervision process. Study findings suggest that it is crucial to enable parent engagement in the education-training process. These issues should be taken into consideration in order to promote an effective supervision. The finding, stating that an atmosphere of positive communication is necessary for an effective supervision, is in line with the studies conducted by Obiweluzors et al. (2013), Drysdale, Goode & Gurr (2009) and Sagir (2011). This study suggests that the communications between educational supervisors or school principals and the teachers should be constructive and positive throughout the supervision process. This finding of the study is in line with the findings of many studies (Waldman & Atwater, 1998; Kudisch et al., 2006; Reynolds, Muijs, & Treharne, 2003; Karakose, Aslan, & Kilic, 2009; Sagir, 2011; Kartal, Karakose, Ozdemir, & Yirci, 2011).

Assigning all the activities of teachers to school principals and disentiing this responsibility from educational supervisors, in changes to the Turkish educational supervision sub-system, was shown to be favored by 19 participants' opinions. Participants found this change positive stating that, together with the presence of a positive communication atmosphere between the teachers and the administrators they work with, supervision would decrease the psychological pressure on teachers (Boydak Ozan & Ozdemir, 2010) and that supervision could be extended to a longer period of time, rather than limiting it to just a one hour course (Aslanargun, 2009; Ozdemir, Boydak Ozan, & Akgun, 2011; Yavuz & Yildirim, 2010).

The change of disentiing educational supervision from educational supervisors and assigning it to school principals was perceived as negative according to 41 participants' opinions. Participant opinions in this direction are categorized as lack of competency regarding supervision, diverging from the principle of equality, and not sparing enough amount of time due to workload. It is stated in the literature that supervisor agents in supervision implementations should have a knowledge of their field and professional teaching knowledge (Schein, 2003; Balci et al., 2007) and that it is crucial for them to be effective communication experts (Kartal et al., 2011; Demirtas, Kahveci, Yirci, Sanli, & Kartal, 2011). Lack of these factors, deemed essential for supervisor agents to effectively and significantly carry out inspections, can cause major problems for the educational system. Making regulations in legal documents regarding issues such as competences of supervisors, equality and sufficient amount of time have vital importance for education and supervision.

In conclusion, it is obvious that problems related to the supervision system are not fully resolved despite the regulation changes that have been made. Teachers have asserted that there are both benefits and also drawbacks of assigning the task of supervision to school principals. A review of the supervision system is a crucial requirement for promoting a

healthy supervision system and for increasing educational quality. Thus, it is evident in these study findings that a new educational supervision model, in which parents can also become involved, and which is based on multiple data sources, should be developed.

Notes

Corresponding author: TUNCAY YAVUZ OZDEMIR

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