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Views of School Administrators Regarding Accreditation Implementations in Educational Inspection

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the views of school administrators regarding the implementation of educational inspection by independent accreditation organizations. The research is qualitative. The data of the study were collected by interviewing 12 school administrators, working in the province of Istanbul, identified through “typical case sampling” method. The study shows that school administrators are well informed about the accreditation system in education and that implementation of accreditation can ensure productivity and efficiency in schools.

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1. Introduction

There are many variables that determine the quality of educational services provided by educational institutions. One of these variables is the inspection units whose job description includes guidance and on the job training for educational school staff. “Inspection systems exist in all complex organizations and they are organizational and administrative requirements” (Aydın, 1993:1). “Inspection is a process indispensable for social activities based mostly on humans aspects” (Cengiz, 1992:7). “The importance of inspection will be understood more clearly by examining the structures of organizations, processes of management and the systems theory” (Taymaz, 1997:4). “Inspection is an important element of the management process and hence of the school management. Inspection helps in the evaluation of the achievement levels regarding predetermined objectives in education and training” (Bursalıoğlu, 1994:129).

Educational inspection is defined as the process that includes the identification achievement levels in predefined organizational objectives, monitoring and refining the operation of the organization and providing professional

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support and guidance services to teachers and the staff in order to develop education and to supervise their behavior (Aydın, 1993:1; Başaran, 1996:73; Bursalıoğlu, 1994:129; Kaya, 1986:148; Taymaz, 1997:2). “Inspection has an essential function and value in all organizational systems in general and in education and school systems in particular “ (Aslan, 1999:287).

“Reorganization of educational systems is ongoing on the one hand and on the other hand; efforts towards adaptation of new organizational and management theories and approaches to education are gaining momentum and importance. The focus of all these work, one of which is accreditation, is the issue of quality. ” (Karslı et al., 2001:351). “The accreditation process provides a unique opportunity for self-examination, setting of new directions, development of new strategic plans and integration of individuals with similar interests” (Johnson, Sackdeva, Pellegrini, 2008). “The organization that accredits presents the standards and validates the fact that the organization that will be accredited provides these standards at a minimum level at least” (Gencel: 2001: 164). “Accreditation associations are self-governing, and, periodically, revise institutional requirements and accreditation criteria” (Darwin et al., 2005: 242).

2. Method

Data was collected through interviews which is a quantitative method. The working group of the study was comprised of 12 school administrator, selected through typical case sampling, who were employed in primary and secondary schools in the province of Istanbul. A “Semi-Structured Interview Form” with 5 open-ended questions developed and utilized by the researchers was used in the study to identify the views of school administrators regarding the implementation of accreditation. During the development phase of the Semi-Structured Interview Form, views of provincial educational inspectors, school administrators, academicians and assessment-evaluation experts were sought regarding the theoretical foundations that were found noteworthy in the literature review and the questions were designed as open ended questions.

The Semi-Structured Interview Form prepared in the field of “accreditation implementations in educational inspection” was administered to school administrators by the researchers themselves in March and April 2012. Appointments were made with the school administrators for interviews and all interviews took place in the offices of the administrators on the date of their appointments. Data during the interviews which lasted between 45-80 minutes with each school administrator were collected by researchers who took notes according to the suggestions of the experts. Additional, non leading questions were asked depending on the answers given by the school administrators and all answers were noted.

3. Findings

3.1 Current Inspection System

School administrators expressed that there were many problems in the structure and organization of the current inspection system. Along the same lines, AA, AB, AF, AG, AH, AJ and AL stated that the professional competencies of educational inspectors were low; AA, AB, AC, AE, AF, AG, AH, AJ and AL stated that there was no uniformity among education inspectors in inspection implementations; AA, AC, AE, AF, AG, AL stated that education inspectors were not objective in inspection implementations; AA, AE, AF, AG and AH stated that they had difficulty in reaching the inspectors or the inspection process in the current system; AB, AF, AI and AK stated that the time allocated for inspection implementations was insufficient and AB, AD and AI stated that they were exposed to mobbing by inspectors.

YL expressed his/her views regarding low professional competencies of educational inspectors in the following statement: “*I do not think inspectors have high professional competencies. The continuously need to adapt themselves to new implementations; they should be open to lifelong learning however unfortunately their professional competencies are low*”. AA; who stated that there was no uniformity among education inspectors in inspection implementations, expressed that view in the following statement: “*Two different inspectors suggest two different implementations at different times about the same issue. In that case, I have doubts about which one is correct or which one is applicable*”. AF who believed that the time allocated for inspection implementations was

insufficient said that *“I believe that the inspectors who are at the school for a short duration during inspection are not really competent in inspecting teachers. Because they assess the teacher only for an hour in the classroom but it is not possible to assess a teacher with observing only one classroom hour”*

3.2. Independent Inspection System

School administrators AA, AB, AC, AF and AG who stated that inspection of education should be undertaken by commissions independent of public organizations, said that independent inspection system requires independent inspectors as well and in this way, the inspectors will not be under pressure. AC, AD, AH, AJ and AK said they believed independent inspection systems in education will increase efficiency in inspection implementations; AA, AF, AG, AH and AL mentioned that the job discipline of these commissions will be much higher than those in the current inspection unit members; AB, AC, AI and AL said it will result in expertise in inspection; AA, AD, AF, AI and AK said they believed undertaking educational inspection by independent commissions will result in objectivity in inspection and AD, AI and AJ said they believe it will result in transparent implementations.

AH expressed in the following statement the idea that independent inspection systems will also liberalize inspectors: *“In the current inspection system, the inspectors work under Ministry of National Education. If there is an independent inspection system, the inspectors will also be independent. Now the inspectors are pressurized by their superiors and they are affected, from time to time they have to make decisions under the effect of these pressures. When they resist, they have problems with their superiors. They cannot make decisions according to their criteria. But when they are independent, they will be able to undertake healthier inspections and functionally of inspection will increase”*. AL who mentioned that the job discipline of inspectors will increase when accreditation system is applied in educational inspection expressed that: *“I believe a respectful inspection unit will create respectful inspectors. Accreditation exists in many sectors in our country. When there is accreditation in education, inspectors will work with more discipline, will not want to lower the prestige of their organization and they will work more diligently. They will know that if they do not work with diligence, the accrediting organization will let them go”*. AI expressed his/her view that existence of independent commissions in the inspection of education will result in expertise in inspection in the following statement: *“The school has tasks related to education and training, management, student services, physical areas, cleaning and hygiene, student health and relationships between school and environment. It is very hard for one inspector to be informed about all the tasks in all these fields and to inspect everything. However, in an independent inspection unit, all areas related to the school can be inspected by the experts in that field. For instance, issues regarding student health can be inspected by a personnel expert in the field of health. I believe that will ensure employing various personnel with expertise in each area of school inspection”*.

3.3. Inspection of the School System

School administrators stated that accreditation implementations in the inspection of education will result in assessing the school as a system. AC, AD, AG, AH and AL expressed that inspecting the school as a system will result in approaching the school as a whole; AB, AG, AE and AF mentioned that it will ensure using common criteria in inspection; AA, AD, AH, AK and AL expressed that it will increase trust towards inspection; AB, AC, AG and AK said that it will ensure taking the diversity in school conditions into consideration.

AC expressed his/her views that inspecting the school as a system will result in approaching the school as a whole in the following statement: *“I believe the inspection of the school system is the inspection of the whole education system. It will be possible to assess the effect of all levels on the school such as the school environment, staff, resources, environment, parent profile, income level of the parents, budget of the school, curriculum and higher management. Hence, it will be seen that principal is not the only person responsible from the shortcomings of the school”*. AG stated that accreditation implementations in the inspection of education will ensure using common criteria in inspection and mentioned that *“Definite criteria will be used for school when they are accredited. So, only the school who can meet these standards will be accredited in the process. Hence it will be more objective and same criteria will be sought in all schools”*. AK said that it will ensure taking the diversity in school conditions into consideration by stating *“The readiness levels of students who are the data in schools and their parents’ social*

status are not the same; or the resources and equipment of the schools etc are not the same. Therefore, the outputs will not be in the same quality. However, the current inspection system does not take the differences in the conditions of schools into consideration; it expects the same degree of success from all schools although their conditions are very different from one another. I believe that accreditation will consider these differences”.

3.4. Ranking of Schools

School administrators who were interviewed in the framework of the study stated that ranking of schools will be possible in the process of accreditation. AB, AF, AG and AL expressed that rankings of schools may cause some problems such as the parents' opting for higher ranking schools for their children; AB, AF, AG and AK asserted that many variables can be used in ranking criteria; AB, AC, AE and AK claimed that implementation of accreditation in educational inspection will increase competition among schools; AF, AG and AH affirmed that implementation of accreditation will increase trust and respect for the school and AA, AC, AH and AL stated that it will enhance school standards.

AB who believed that there may be problems in rankings of schools mentioned that *“If schools are ranked according to the accreditation process, schools at the top rank will be more in demand by the parents and the schools at the bottom ranks will have difficulty getting any students to enroll, because parents will not send their children to these schools”*. AG asserting that many variables can be used in ranking criteria added that *“Everything about the school needs to be taken into consideration when ranking the schools. Many different criteria should be used such as number of students, number of labs, library, income and expenses of the school, number of teachers and administrators in the school, number of classrooms in the school and average number of students per classroom, landscaping etc”*. AA, who believed that ranking of schools will enhance school standards, stated that *“If schools are accredited according to definite criteria, the schools will strive to fulfill those criteria. Therefore, the standards of the schools will start to increase and all the schools will strive to achieve these standards which will result in uniformity in obtaining similar standards”*.

3.5. Effect of accreditation to school

School administrators who were interviewed in the framework of the study affirmed that accreditation implementations in the inspection of education will have many benefits to schools. AF, AG and AH stated it will motivate school staff; AA, AB, AD and AJ said it will result in participatory management approaches; AB, AD, AI and AK mentioned it will ensure better quality education; AC, AD, AI and AL said it will enhance school standards and AA, AC, AG and AI stated that it will develop school culture and feelings of belonging to school.

AF expressed his/her belief that accreditation implementations will motivate school staff in the following statement: *“All teachers would like to work in a school whose quality is documented. Therefore, they work to enhance school quality which increases their motivation to realize school mission and vision. They do anything not to decrease the school rankings”*. AD mentioned that accreditation implementations will result in participatory management approaches made the following statement: *“As a school principal, I would like to see my school in higher levels. Therefore I try to take the views of all my teachers and even the parents into consideration. I ask for the opinion of anyone who can contribute to the school”*. AI who stated accreditation implementations will develop school culture and feelings of belonging to school added that *“If the school is ranked among the top during the accreditation process, teachers, students and parents will be happy to be members of this school. This will also increase their commitment and will help create a strong culture in the school. If the school is registered to a top level school, everyone will adapt their behavior accordingly and school specific rituals will develop”*.

4. Results and Discussion

Results show that several problems exist in the current inspection system such as low professional competencies of educational inspectors; no uniformity among education inspectors; insufficient objectivity in inspection implementations; inherent difficulty in reaching the inspectors or the inspection process in the current system; insufficient time allocated for inspection implementations and exposure to mobbing under inspection by inspectors.

Sağır's (2005) previous study aimed to identify the perceptions of teachers, administrators and inspectors regarding the role of inspectors in on-site training of teachers employed in primary schools. The results showed that inspectors' guidance and on-site training activities were ranked by teachers as "very little", by primary school administrators as "partially" and by primary school inspectors as "completely". Chunn's (1986) research to determine the supervisory attitudes and behaviors necessary in effective inspection showed that inspectors have negative attitudes and behaviors in communication, identification of problems related to teaching and support for teachers regarding issues in instruction and that they do not often display these behaviors. Levin, Hoffman and Badiali (1987) found in their research that teachers had the perception that inspection aims and supports the development of teaching and that teachers should be supervised sufficiently in order to realize this aim. Hobson's (1990) study that aimed to identify the relationship between the qualifications of inspectors and the professional development of teachers found that teachers believed they were assessed according to their personality characteristics by the inspectors. Patterson (1990) showed that teachers, school administrators and inspectors had varying ideas about inspection implementations and teachers perceived that they did not receive sufficient supervisory support from the inspectors.

It can be claimed that inspection implementations by independent commissions will liberalize inspectors, increase the efficient of inspection, discipline inspection, bring expertise and transparency to inspection and provide objectivity. It can be asserted that accreditation implementations in the inspection of education will result in assessing the school as a uniform system which will result in evaluating schools as a whole rather than parts; will provide common criteria in inspection; will increase trust in inspection and will cause taking diversity in school system elements into consideration in inspection.

It can be suggested that ranking of schools will be possible in the process of accreditation implementations in the inspection of education however; it will create problems such as high demands for top ranking schools. Notwithstanding, accreditation implementations will create rivalry among schools, increase trust and respect towards school and enhance school standards. It can also be claimed that accreditation implementations in the inspection of education will result in participatory management approaches in schools, increase motivation, enhance quality in education and school standards and develop school culture and feelings of belonging to school.

According to the findings of the study, the school principals were found to be informed of accreditation implementations in the inspection of education which can provide efficiency and productivity in schools. Literature review points out that there is not sufficient research regarding the accreditation implementations in the inspection of primary and secondary school organizations, therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the existing research in the literature.

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