

Opinions of High School Administrators on Teachers' Organizational Dissent Behaviors*

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out the reasons that trigger teachers' dissent, how the dissenters behave and the effects of organizational dissent on the teachers, administrators, and the school. The study was conducted with the qualitative methods. 15 school administrators working in five different schools located in Mamak District in Ankara participated in the search. The data were collected with the semi-structured interview form and analyzed with the content and descriptive analysis methods. For the purpose of presenting the data, the frequencies of the administrators' opinions were tabled and also administrators' views were described with the direct quotations. Eventually, it has been seen that the basic reason that triggers the teachers' dissent behavior is official work that is given by their administrators. Another result is that dissenters commonly minimize their relations with their administrators. School administrators also think that they commonly show tolerance to the dissenters and their attitude toward them is positive. On the other hand, they consider the organizational dissent as a factor that affects their comfort negatively. And lastly they think that organizational dissent cause destructive results at school.

Key Words

Organizational Dissent, Whistle Blowing, Pedagogy of Dissent.

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Organizational democracy has been extensively investigated in the organizational literature in the last decades (Cheney, 1995; Chiles & Zorn, 1995; Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Derber & Schwartz, 1983; Kassing, 1997a; Marshall & Stohl, 1993; Vredenburg & Brender, 1993). Organizational dissent as being one of the basic indicators of democracy is an important variable in diagnosing organizational problems as well (Kassing, 2002; Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007). Similarly, some writers suggest that organizational dissent may contribute to organizational success and increase the job satisfaction of workers (Hegstrom, 1990; Redding, 1985; Stanley, 1981). Organizational dissent may also result in negative effects including organizational conflict and violence (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007). The term "dissent" has Latin roots. In Latin, *dis* means apart, and *sentire* means feelings. Thus, dissent means 'feeling apart' (Kassing, 1997b). Organizational dissent has two parts; one of which is disagreement

and the other part is to articulate disagreement with different ways inside or outside of organization (Ardoğan, 2004; Kassing & DiCioccio, 2004; Redding, 1985; Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 2010). Therefore dissent can be defined as “particular form of employee voice that involves the expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices and policies” (Kassing, 2002, p. 189). There are some organizational events which trigger the organizational dissent including employee treatment, organizational change, decision making, inefficiency, role-responsibility, resources, ethics, performance evaluation, and preventing harm (Graham, 1986; Kassing, 2001; Kassing & Armstrong, 2002). There are several ways of expressing dissent. The most common ones are (i) whistle-blowing (Aktan, 2006; Jubb, 1999), (ii) articulated dissent (Cannings, 1992; Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Kassing, 2000; Kassing & Armstrong, 2001; Kassing & Avtgis, 1999, 2001), (iii) latent dissent (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992) and, (iv) displaced dissent (Kassing, 1998). Studies showed close relationship between various organizational variables and organizational dissent (Avtgis, Thomas-Maddox, Taylor, & Patterson, 2007; Goodboy, Chory, & Dunleavy, 2008; Kassing, 2000; Kassing & DiCioccio, 2004; Kassing & McDowel, 2008; Payne, 2007; Sprague & Ruud, 1988). And also, some other studies have concentrated on the possible effects of dissent (Graham, 1986; Hegstrom, 1990). The dissent literature in educational settings can be classified as political (Chisholm, 1999; Cliggett & Wyssmann, 2009; Favela, 2010; Kirk, 2009; Murillo & Ronconi, 2004) and pedagogical (Gordon, 2008; MacKinnon, 2000; McMurray, 2007; Mulcahy & Irwin, 2008). But these research areas do not directly concentrate on the organizational dissent behavior of teachers at schools. Therefore the purpose of present study is to find out the reasons that trigger teachers’ dissent, how dissenters behave and the effects of organizational dissent on teachers, administrators and the school.

Method

The study which is a descriptive survey was carried out with qualitative research method which aims to understand peoples’ life styles, stories and behaviors, organizational structures and social change (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Study Group

15 school administrators working in different pub-

lic high schools located in Mamak district in Ankara in 2009-2010 academic year participated in the study. Because the research was carried with qualitative methods, the numbers of the participants were restricted.

Instrument

In order to collect data, semi-structured interview form was developed by the researcher. In process of developing the form, the literature about organizational dissent was comprehensively examined and 25 high school teachers were interviewed to explore the main dimensions of organizational dissent. Draft form was examined by experts. The form had three main questions which targeted to reveal what triggered organizational dissent, how dissenters behaved and what the possible outcomes of dissent on teachers, administrators and schools were.

Processes and Data Analysis

After the instrument was developed, participants were interviewed with semi-structured interview form by the researcher. Then the interview documents were analyzed with content and descriptive analyzing techniques. Because there is a fundamental theory and conceptual basis about the research topic, the researcher used *a priori* concepts in the processes of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003, p. 165). Then, the data were put under the sub-categories and main categories. And finally, the frequencies and percentages of the sub-categories and main categories were determined and tabled.

Validity and Reliability

For internal-validity (i) the data were interpreted just after they were presented in the findings section. In addition, (ii) direct quotations of the participants were presented in the text to support the findings. For external validity (i) detailed information about the basic steps of the study including design, study group, instrument, processes, and data analyzing techniques were presented and (ii) interview documents were kept for the further confirmation. The reliability study was also conducted. For this purpose, two experts were asked to code the documents based on the coding list. The coding which were performed by two different experts were compared according to the ‘the formula of agreement percentage’ (Türümlü, 2000 cited in

Yeşildere & Türnüklü, 2007). The results showed high level of agreement between the experts.

Findings and Discussion

Findings show that the most common reason of the organizational dissent at schools is to charge the teachers with extra jobs. There are also other reasons which trigger teachers' dissent. These are, (i) lack of sufficient qualifications for a job, (ii) prejudice, (iii) resisting to changes, (iv) organizational decisions, (v) favoritism, (vi) using the organizational sources and (vii) injustice. All of these findings are consistent with the similar studies (Agocs, 1997; Baykal & Kovancı, 2008; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Johnson & Sharma, 2004; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Köksal, 2008; Marken, 1999; Zayim, 2005). Finding also revealed that whistle blowing is not common among Turkish teachers. When dissent triggering events happen, teachers usually minimize their communication with their administrators. In addition, some teachers prefer articulated dissent. These findings are similar with previous studies (Arnold & Penemon, 1991; Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Gorden & Infante, 1987; Graham, 1986). According to findings, school administrators communicate with the dissenters in a positive manner. Although some of the administrators think that the dissent at schools contributes for their personal improvement, some others think that dissent make them uneasy. And last finding imply that dissent produce either constructive or destructive results at schools. These findings also support similar studies (Hegstrom, 1990; Kassing, 2002; Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007).

Results

This study revealed the basic triggering events of the organizational dissent behaviors of teachers according to opinions of school administrators. The findings imply that there exist some personal and administrative reasons which push teachers to dissent. Secondly, it was found out that whistle blowing is not common among Turkish teachers according to administrators. And lastly, dissent may cause different results including destruction or construction at schools. Because the study was conducted with a small group of school administrators, huge groups including teachers can be included in the further studies on organizational dissent at schools.

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