The Functionality of Guidance and Supervision Visits Made by Supervisors in Primary Schools

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to determine to what extent the problems detected at the guidance and supervision reports could be solved and in this context, to what degree these visits were functional. So, with a qualitative research approach, data were obtained at two stages and analyzed through NVivo 7 software. At the first stage, the guidance and supervision reports of 2007-2008 academic year were obtained from Education Supervisors Board and were analyzed comparatively for forty primary schools which were randomly selected from the schools in the city center of Yozgat. At the second stage, ten education supervisors were interviewed. The results of the research showed that there were some problems unsolved at each of the six categories (physical situation, instructional situation, clerical works, student affairs, personnel affairs and affairs of budget and movable goods). Especially the physical problems that necessitate pecuniary resource and instructional problems that require some competencies related to the new curriculum were revealed to remain unsolved in most of the schools. It was recommended for schools to be allocated a sufficient budget and for school administrators and teachers to be equipped with necessary competencies to solve problems.

Key Words

Guidance, Supervision, Education Supervisors, School Administrators, Teachers.

The primal approach in modern supervision is developing education and instruction in a process-based way. So, modern supervision is viewed as a process that is based on human relations, improvement and development, team work, cooperation, professional assistance, guidance, and motivation (Aydın, 1986, 1987; Başar, 1998). Thus, supervision takes responsibilities of analyzing, evaluating and developing teaching and learning activities and environments. In this approach, supervision has a function of providing support and assistance for stakeholders such as teachers and administrators for developing the process, therefore, has an effect on the quality of instructional outcomes (Ünal, 1989).

The related research showed that supervision has a positive effect on efficiency and effectiveness of educational organizations (Başar, 1998). Effective supervision is needed for ensuring school effectiveness and developing an effective learning environment (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1993; Sullivan & Glanz, 2004). Also, effective supervision is among the most important tools for improving the quality of schools (De Grauwe, 2007).

Classical supervision approach -that is bureaucratic, suppressing, having a negative view on the nature of human and so assuming that personnel should be under the pressure of external supervision- is viewed as inefficient for causing educational organizations to succeed in getting desired outcomes (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). In the context of modern supervision approaches, in order

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to ensure the effectiveness and functionality of supervision, cooperation and equality based relations between supervisor and teacher, participative decision-making at the end of the supervision, reflective listening and applications, self-evaluation, and self-direction of teachers are advised (Glanz, 2000; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986). As a result of this approach, teachers are expected to attain a development level to take all the responsibilities of improving their own instructional applications with the professional assistance of supervisor (Çelik, 2002; Grashel, 1997).

The Responsibilities of Supervisors in Turkish Education System

Supervision tasks are performed by ministry supervisors and education supervisors in Turkish education system. Ministry Supervisors are responsible for performing the duties of supervision and inquiry about the central, provincial and external organization of the Ministry and they are responsible for supervising all the activities of the subordinate bodies and schools of the Ministry (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 1993). The board of the education supervisors is organized in the cities and provinces and is responsible for the supervision of the all educational organizations in primary level. The duties and responsibilities of the education supervisors are: (*i*) Guidance and on the job training, (*ii*) Supervision and evaluation, (*iii*) Inspection, (*iv*) Inquiry and (*v*) Scrutiny (MEB, 1999).

Guidance and on the job training, as one of the five primary duties of the education supervisors, include the supervision and evaluation process performed for improving the educational activities. The essentials of this process were determined in the Guidance and Supervision Guideline of Education Supervisors Board (MEB, 2001). Education supervisors perform their duties according to this guideline in the border of the cities they were assigned by Ministry of National Education and they make supervision plans within the supervision groups they were assigned by Education Supervisors Board. Each supervision group is responsible for the guidance, supervision and evaluation of the educational organizations within their assigned supervision area and they perform their duties according to the annual and monthly work plans prepared by their supervision groups.

Supervision of Organizations

Supervision of organizations means; informing organizations about innovations in the system, determining the factors which weaken organizations and cause difficulties in effective functioning, taking necessary measures duly and suitably, making human and material resources to be utilized appropriately and effectively for attaining the goals of organization, monitoring and evaluating managerial, educational and instructional activities according to the rules and guidelines and improving these processes (MEB, 2001).

Supervision of organizations contains all the managerial, educational, and instructional activities. Managers, teachers and all the other personnel should be supervised in supervision of organizations. In this context, guidance, professional aid and on the job training services are given.

The nota bene of the supervision of organizations were declared in the Guidance and Supervision Guideline of Education Supervisors Board (MEB, 2001). The guidance and supervision activities of the education supervisors were performed in this legal framework. According to this legal framework supervisors should notice these six headlines during the supervision of organizations: (*i*) Physical situation, (*ii*) Instructional situation, (*iii*) Clerical works, (*iv*) Student affairs, (*v*) Personnel affairs and (*vi*) Affairs of budget and movable goods.

Guidance and supervision of organizations were performed in the abovementioned six categories. The result reports of the supervision of organizations are written under these six categories and according to the type of the organizations. At the first semester, guidance visits are performed by the supervisors and guidance reports are given both to the visited school as a feedback and to the Supervisors Board. In these guidance reports, current situation is stated expressly, shortages and deficiencies are listed and recommendations for improvement are cited. In accordance with the guidance report given to the related school by the supervisors, managers of this school discuss with the teachers and other personnel about the pros and cons of the current situation, how the problems can be solved, how the shortages can be made up, how the deficiencies can be supplied and how the current situation can be improved. Then, managers make a plan for improvement and allocate the duties to their personnel.

At the second semester, education supervisors perform supervision visits to the schools which they performed guidance visits at the first semester. At

supervision visits, supervisors evaluate the current situation of these schools in comparison with the former situation as determined at guidance visits. Supervisors evaluate whether the problems have been solved or not and to what degree managerial and instructional improvements have been actualized. As a result of the supervision visits, evaluation scores are reported for managers and teachers according to the criteria at "supervision forms for teachers and managers". Also, "feedback score of organization" is determined by taking the mean of the evaluation scores of all teachers and managers working at the related organization.

As a result of the supervision visits, the competency levels of managers, teachers and other personnel are determined and their in-service training needs are designated according to their inefficiencies. In-service training needs of the personnel are grouped according to the competency areas and the related report is conveyed to the Supervisors Board within the last week of May. The Supervisors Board arranges in-service training activities for managers, teachers and other personnel according to the reports of the supervisors and in coordination with the related units and organizations (MEB, 2001).

The results of many researches performed about the supervision of educational organizations in Turkey showed that the supervisees think; supervisors do not meet their expectations (Altun & Memişoğlu, 2008), do not play guidance roles efficiently (Can, 2004; Ovalı, 2010), they are always in need of supervisors' guidance in many matters (Erol, 2010), but they are generally not satisfied with supervisors' actions (Töremen & Döş, 2009). The related research showed that there are some problems in performing the duties of supervision and guidance. If the supervisors perform efficiently their guidance roles, it could be expected that the problems determined at guidance visits might be solved at supervision visits. So, in this study, the reports of the guidance and supervision visits are analyzed comparatively. Especially for determining the functionality of guidance visits, supervision reports were analyzed for quantifying to what degree the problems determined at the guidance visits were solved. Besides, the views and recommendations of the supervisors were taken for solving the problems.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent the problems detected at the guidance and supervision reports could be solved and in this context, to what degree these visits are functional.

Method

This study was designed on the basis of qualitative research approach. The data were obtained at two stages and analyzed through NVivo 7 software. At the first stage, the guidance and supervision reports of forty primary schools were analyzed comparatively with document analysis. This sample of forty primary schools was randomly selected from the primary schools in the city center of Yozgat in 2007-2008 academic year. At the second stage, ten education supervisors were interviewed. These supervisors were selected randomly from the education supervisors working at Yozgat city at 2007-2008 academic year. A semi-structured interview form (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006) was employed to interview with the supervisors. After ten supervisors were interviewed, it was concluded that the collected data reached a level of theoretical saturation, because of the categories and the relationships among these categories became clear (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This interview form included items requesting supervisors' comments related to the findings of the document analysis at the first stage and items about the functionality of guidance and supervision visits. The data were coded and categorized with content analysis approach (Balcı, 2001).

Results

According to the "Guidance and Supervision Guidelines", there are six categories that should be examined by the supervisors: (*i*) Physical situation, (*ii*) Instructional situation, (*iii*) Clerical works, (*iv*) Student affairs, (*v*) Personnel affairs and (*vi*) Affairs of budget and movable goods. The results of this research showed that there were some problems unsolved at each of the six categories. The physical problems that cannot be solved by administrators' and teachers' own efforts and necessitate pecuniary resource (such as constructing and/or repairing garden wall and water main) remained unsolved. According to the views of the supervisors, neither guidance nor supervision is functional in the category of physical situation, because of the lack of pecuniary resource and budgetary limitations.

Some problems related to the new curriculum were not solved in most of the schools (such as action-based teaching in math, reading and writing works, measurement and evaluation applications) and some of them were not solved at any of the schools (such as, instructional materials, student-centered teaching, focusing on students' acquisitions at

teaching). Supervisors view that most of the problems related to instructional situation are generally not instant events but rather results of long-time process-related variables. So guidance and supervision visits are partially effective and not fully functional for resolving these kinds of problems.

Under the category of clerical works, school administrators had difficulties in writing some official correspondences and registration of these official documents. As supervisors pointed out, these relatively less important problems stemmed from the school administrators' lack of experience. Under the category of student affairs, school administrators had some problems with students' folders and some official documents related to students. But supervisors stated these problems became less important as the e-school system was accommodated. According to the Guideline of Primary Schools (MEB, 2008), in primary schools, e-school system was adopted, so students' files no longer need to be edited.

Under the category of personnel affairs, the problems related to personnel registry and monitoring the works of personnel remained unsolved. According to the supervisors, this stemmed from the school administrators' low levels of competency and their lack of experience. At the category of "affairs of budget and movable goods", problems related to "enumerating and listing movable goods and registries" were unsolved at most of the schools. Supervisors pointed out that this was due to school administrators' lack of knowledge about the new regulations on the related instructions. Because, The Guideline of Movable Properties (MEB, 2006) was changed and school administrators were not informed enough about this change.

Conclusions, Discussions and Implications

In this study, both the document analysis and interviews with education supervisors were carried out within the framework of the above-mentioned six categories. As previous research showed (Altun & Memişoğlu, 2008; Can, 2004; Dağlı, 2001; Danyeri, 2001; Ekinci, 2010; Gökçe, 2009; Gün, 2001; Kapusuzoğlu, 2002; Memişoğlu, 2001; Özdayı & Özcan, 2002; Soylu, 2003;), there were some problematic areas in Turkish supervision system and supervisors were inefficient in some matters such as guidance and professional development. The findings of this study also showed there were many problems remained unsolved under the six categories. These findings raised doubts on the functionality of guidance and supervision visits and the efficiency of supervisors in some matters. Under the category of physical situation, the problems that could be solved with schools' individual efforts were found to be solved at most of the schools, while the problems that necessitate pecuniary resource were not solved in most of them. This result showed that allocation of a sufficient budget was necessary for schools to surmount these kinds of problems, because Turkish education system is compulsory and basic education is free of charge (MEB, 1961). Also, as Yıldırım and Dönmez (2008) found out, it would be helpful for school administrators to develop school family cooperation for solving financial and physical problems of their schools.

Under the category of instructional situation, instructional problems that required some competencies related to the new curriculum were revealed to remain unsolved in most of the schools. Besides, school administrators' lack of cooperative working skills, their burnout, and indifference levels were deemed by supervisors among the reasons of these unsolved instructional problems. These problems may have stemmed from the supervisors' lack of guidance; as it was pointed out by Gökalp (2010) that most of the teachers perceive supervisors as incompetent in guiding them for solving instructional problems. It was recommended for supervisors, school administrators and teachers to be equipped with necessary competencies to solve problems. Also, educational authorities should show interest in these personnel for healing their individual problems that may result in some instructional problems.

Under the categories of clerical works, student affairs, personnel affairs and affairs of budget and movable goods, there were relatively few and less important problems unsolved stemming from the administrators' and teachers' lack of knowledge, skill and experience. The problems at these categories seem more surmountable in comparison with the physical and instructional problems. In order to solve physical problems, some complex legal problems need to be tackled and additional financial resources need to be found. Similarly, to solve instructional problems, some process related variables need to be surmounted by exerting extra effort for a long time.

Some structural problems in supervision system may have prevented some problems from being solved. As Kayıkçı (2005) stressed that supervisors think there were some structural problems in Turk-

ish education system that impede the functionality of supervision. Koçak (2006) indicated that the current supervisor-oriented system was not effective to solve problems and a more objective, supervisee-oriented and participative supervision approach is needed.

School administrators' and teachers' lack of effort may be another reason for some problems remained unsolved. Erdem (2010) and Öztürk (2009) confirmed that teachers and school administrators did not exert adequate effort and did not work with supervisors cooperatively so as to solve the problems. It would be helpful to take the views of the other stakeholders of schools such as school administrators, teachers, students, and parents to understand why some problems remained unsolved and how supervision activities became more effective.

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