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IMPACT OF CENTRALISED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION ON TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY OF A PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN TURKEY

AYSE BAS COLLINS

Abstract - This paper presents the results of a case study focusing on the implementation of centralised instructional supervisory practices at a private secondary school. It explores the perception of administrators, department heads, and teachers regarding the strengths, weaknesses and impact of this system on teaching and learning, teacher development, and school improvement. The results show that the present centralised inspection system has deficiencies due to its judgemental and subjective nature and its lack of adequate inspectors, both in terms of quantity and quality. Overall the system is seen as an administrative assessment and does not provide formative support to the teachers. This paper points out the need for change of the existing system, where new forms of central inspection which fail outside government intervention are adopted or, alternatively, more importance is given to school-based forms of supervision.

Introduction

The concept of 'supervision' is defined as the art of accomplishing work through the efforts and abilities of other people (Bishop, 1976). The 'large shadow army of school personnel known by the collective title of supervisors,' as Oliva (1989) terms them, play a major role in the direction education takes within a school system. They can be a positive force, giving guidance and/or direction, or they can allow the system to run itself with no clear course and no measurement of achievement.

The 'instructional supervisory role' can be assumed by one or several different individuals. They may be professionals from outside the school or the school principal or a department head or even a senior instructor. Supervisors are generally expected to demonstrate methods, provide suggestions for improvement, issue specific instructions, evaluate the results, and individual teacher's performance. In unison with teachers, the supervisor is expected to evaluate programmes and course content, ensuring that they meet achievement levels required. In this sense, the supervisor's critique should lead to an improvement in the curriculum, and in teaching and learning generally. Such, indeed, should be the effect of what Nealey and Evans (1980) refer to as the 'democratic nature' of modern supervision.

Historically, school supervisors fulfilled this role by giving directions, checking compliance with prescribed teaching techniques, and evaluating instructional effectiveness. Even as early as the 1920's certain tasks were listed as being pertinent to supervisors (Burton, 1922). Many of these tasks formed the basis for guidelines to good supervisory assessment that are still practiced today. They consisted of improvement of the teaching act (classroom visits, individual and group conferences, directed teaching, demonstration teaching, and development of standards for self-improvement), the improvement of teachers in service (teachers' meetings, professional readings, bibliographies and reviews, bulletins, self-analysis and criticism), and the selection and organisation of subject-matter (setting up objectives, studies of subject-matter and learning activities, experimental testing of materials, constant revision of courses, the selection and evaluation of supplementary instructional materials). The list ended with testing and measuring (the use of standardised and local tests for classification, diagnosis, guidance), and the rating of teachers (the development and use of rating cards, of check-lists, stimulation of self-rating).

The literature presents various models for instructional supervision. One such classification offers four supervision approaches: scientific (Barr *et al.*, 1961; Carroll, 1963; Dewey, 1929; Gagne, 1967), clinical (Cogan, 1973; Garman, 1982), artistic (Eisner, 1982), and eclectic (Sergiovanni, 1982). On her part, Oliva (1989) groups supervision into three categories: scientific management, *laissez-faire* and approaches influenced by group dynamics. Poster (1991) offered another classification: developmental, *laissez-faire*, managerial, and judgmental. Furthermore, different authors give similar definitions to their suggested models, such as evaluation for professional development (Duke and Stiggings, 1990), evaluation for career awards and merit pay (Bacharach *et al.*, 1990), evaluation for tenure and dismissal (Bridges, 1990), and evaluation for school improvement (Iwanicki, 1990). These classifications all have similarities. They depend on whether the organisation is strictly structured with bureaucratic levels, or non-structured, fostering a creative atmosphere where individual dynamics are cultivated. The structured approaches tend to generate a realm of uniformity, with little creativity afforded the individual teacher. The less structured approaches enhance the development of an ethos of risk taking and initiative.

Different countries have adopted different types of school systems, with centralisation and decentralisation being two categories that are very useful as 'ideal types' defining the main orientations. Those governments that have chosen a more or less centralised system opt for a major role in determining the direction of their schools, in both policy and administrative decisions. Those choosing an approach marked by decentralisation place the decision-making authority at the school site.

We find examples of both systems in various European and Mediterranean countries, with each country adopting elements of each in order to address particular needs. Thus, the education systems of France, Belgium, the UK, Egypt, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Tunisia, to mention a few, are more or less centralised in nature. In contrast, Finland, Greece, Germany, Sweden; Denmark, Iceland and Norway tend to be rather more decentralised - at least in some aspects.

Though traditionally centralised, France has adopted aspects of each system in recent years. For a long time, France could be considered as a classic illustration of centralised-instructional supervision. It was said that the minister of education could tell, on any given day, exactly where each teacher was in any textbook throughout the entire country (Oliva, 1989). Such a system requires a highly structured form of instruction and a highly centralised system of supervision. Today, France is divided into 33 academies, educational jurisdictions headed by a Rector, which oversee both primary and secondary education. Secondary principals are the immediate subordinates of their Rectors, and the rectorate also employs subject matter specialists as inspectors to evaluate the teaching of secondary teachers. The governance of primary education involves an even smaller educational jurisdiction, the district. Each district is headed by a district inspector who is subordinate to a head primary school inspector who works with the academy. The inspector is in charge of 250-300 primary teachers and is assisted in his or her work by two teaching advisers, a special education supervisor, and an office secretary (Auduc and Bayard-Pierlot, 1995). Although the intellectual/academic side of French education is in the hands of the Ministry and its subordinate divisions, the material side is provided for by local governments.

The UK also experienced a need to move away from its tradition of centralised educational supervision. During the 1970's it became evident that the demand for accountability in education shifted from broad issues of finance and program management to specific concerns regarding the quality of classroom teaching and teachers' (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 1983). UK educators thought that a form of system decentralisation might provide greater accountability. Though the revised system, with its pros and cons, offered more freedom to the individual school district, it was met with resistance by teaching staff. After failing to acquire consensus among the educational corps, the UK returned to centralisation. However, in 1991 the UK established an independent inspection body (Office for Standards in Education-OFSTED) in order to evaluate all secondary school teachers. This office is directly responsible to the Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, not to the Ministry of Education.

Decisions regarding centralisation and decentralisation are largely political in nature, and educators are generally impotent when faced with the dictate of

government. However, while one might disagree with the form of supervision imposed, it is nevertheless clear that some form of teacher evaluation is necessary. What one has to be alert to is the extent to which the effort to improve teaching performance gives rise to systems of supervision that are rather more summative than formative in nature (Knapp, 1982). One has also to be aware of the fact that developmental supervision is derived from an educational philosophy of 'progressivism,' which sees learning as the result of actively placing ideas and knowledge to work in the real world, the individual as the end, subject matter as the means, and society as the result.

How centralised instructional supervision works in Turkey

Turkey's educational system is broadly based on the early French system and influenced by the centralist tradition outlined above. The Ministry of Education (MOE) centrally determines procedures and processes, including school policies and regulations, curriculum standards and teacher supervision. The MOE's stated belief is that each child has unique educational, social and emotional needs that require quality instruction from all staff members. Therefore, the MOE Inspectors, being professional employees in the Ministry, have the responsibility to ensure that the needs of the students are met. The MOE meets this responsibility through teacher evaluation in all primary and secondary schools, both state and private. Private schools do not rely on the central system for monetary support. However, their licensing is dependent on compliance with the standards of the central system.

In the Turkish education system, supervision focuses primarily on controlling and directing schools. There are differences between definition, function and content of the term 'supervision' used in Western countries. Within the Turkish centralised system, there are two groups of inspectors, Elementary School Inspectors responsible for the first to fifth grades within individual provinces, and Secondary Inspectors responsible for the sixth to eleventh grades nationwide. These inspectors are afforded high status. They have the authority to visit any school at any time during the year according to a ratified MOE programme. The Board of Ministry Inspectors is made up of one chairman and a number of inspectors, all of whom are appointees of the MOE. The chairman of the Board is responsible for carrying out the dictates of the Board to the Undersecretary and MOE (Ministry of Education Board of Inspectors Regulations, 1988).

Inspectors are appointed from practicing teachers who meet the required qualities. Until 1993, teachers with 5 years teaching and 3 years administrative experience and appropriate leadership qualities were selected as inspectors without the need for sitting exams and/or undergoing special training. However,

due to political abuse of the system and the inadequacy of inspectors, drastic action was undertaken. In 1993, therefore, these qualities, requirements and selection procedures were modified based on new standards. Candidates are now required to have ten-year teaching experience. Alternatively, they are expected to have five years experience of teaching together with at least three years of experience in educational administration. In addition to this, candidates have to demonstrate leadership quality in both their subject matter and in administration. Although there was no age limit in the previous selection criteria, now candidates must not be over 40 years old. Those who meet these requirements are permitted to sit a written exam. The exam has five components: (1) writing a composition on educational issues, (2) a test on general issues such as Turkish Republic Constitution, or laws related to government officers, (3) answering questions related to special issues on education, (4) knowledge on subject matter and teaching techniques, and (5) foreign language competence (English, or German, or French). Candidates must receive a score of 70 for the first four components and 50 for the foreign language portion. Those who pass are called for an oral exam. During the oral exam, a panel considers the candidates' background, as well as their studies and their communication skills. The minimum score for the oral exam is 70. Those who pass both the written and oral exams are appointed as assistant inspectors and work under the guidance of head inspectors during one year. After the completion of that year they sit a proficiency exam to be recognised as an inspector. They are also required to attend various in-service training programmes throughout their career (Ministry of Education Board of Inspectors Regulation, 1993).

Ministry inspectors are stationed in the three largest cities: Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir. They travel all over Turkey in teams of four or five (sometimes more) during major inspection tours. There are no prescribed region or province for any of these teams. Any inspector may be assigned to any region in Turkey during the school year.

Inspection is carried out in two areas: school administration and classroom teaching. During the administrative inspection, the principal, assistant heads, and other school staff are assessed regarding the school administration process. The scope of this administrative inspection is limited to the school and its context. As for the classroom teaching inspection, inspectors carry out 'classroom observations' during which teachers' instructional skills, their plans, and the effects of the teacher upon classroom activities are evaluated. Evaluation is to also include the degree to which the teachers apply their annual study plans, their ability to prepare written exams and their out-of-class activities.

Schools are advised in advance of an up-coming inspection by the MOE, and are also informed about which goals are to be met. Prior to the actual visit, the

school administration prepares the 'State Civil Servant's Personnel Reports' for each teacher. The report consists of two parts: background information and teaching/administration performance. The school administration fills out the background information for the staff including teachers, assistant heads and department heads. When the inspectors arrive at the school, they collect these forms from the principal. After the teacher evaluation, inspectors fill out the second part on performance, addressing issues such as responsibility and enthusiasm towards the job, knowledge of the subject matter, clarity in oral and written work, efforts in self-improvement, ability to engage in team work, objectivity, discipline and relationship with peers and superiors. The point total is 100. Failure to achieve 59 points warrants a negative assessment report. The principal is not permitted to see these forms after they are filled out. The forms are then transmitted to the MOE inspection department, where all teacher evaluation reports are maintained.

Before the class visit, inspectors are supposed to meet the teachers in order to become acquainted, and to inform them about what they intend to observe in their class. Generally, they then proceed to the classroom with the teacher and sit among students - generally at the back of the class - in order to better observe the delivery of the lesson. Inspectors are expected to refrain from interfering the teacher during instruction time. After the lesson is over, the inspector prepares a written report on the basis of the observation, and evaluates the teacher's overall performance, noting whether this was very good, good, average or poor. Teachers do not have access to this report.

Several evaluative studies of the Turkish Education Inspection System have been carried out. Most of these are based on quantitative surveys and designed to reach generalisable results regarding the effectiveness of the current ministry inspection system. Although the MOE expends a great deal of effort to improve and strengthen the inspection system through selection of inspectors and training, these studies have shown that the centralised system is flawed and requires a great deal of reform if it is to become effective and efficient. Yavuz (1995) concluded that contemporary educational principles are not applied during centralised inspection. His study showed that centralised supervisory activities are not similar to 'clinical supervision'. Similarly, in his study Kama] (1994) found that the opinions of inspectors, principals and teachers differed significantly from each other in regard to the guidance that should be provided during supervision. Karsli (1990, 1994) investigated the perception of teachers and principals on classroom supervision carried out by Ministry Inspectors. His studies concluded that (a) the number of classroom supervision and the time spent in class supervision was not sufficient, and (b) classroom observation criteria were ambiguous.

Private schools in Turkey have recognised the problems with the centralised inspection system. Accountability in fee-paying schools is a crucial issue, given the demand on the part of stakeholders for high teacher performance. Private schools, faced as they are with competition for students, and responding as they have to to the concern for effectiveness and efficiency in the teaching and learning process, have found themselves under pressure to guarantee adequate supervision. Thus, besides the Ministerial inspection system, private schools have established their own 'school-based supervision system' to maintain and improve the quality of teaching in their establishments. This involves principals and/or department heads in new responsibilities, including those of teacher supervision. In some private schools the principal observes teachers or is assisted by one of the heads of the departments. In other schools, department heads take direct charge of supervision. In still others, coordinators in different discipline areas assume the responsibility.

Although, as mentioned earlier, there are several quantitative studies showing the deficiencies with the centralised Ministry inspection system, there is a dearth of in-depth qualitative data. In an attempt to address this lacuna, the following research questions were raised and addressed in the present study:

1. What is the structure of centralised instructional supervision system?
2. How is this system perceived by the administrators, department heads, and teachers in terms of its weaknesses and strengths?
3. What impact does this system have on the teaching and learning process, teacher improvement and overall school development?

Case study

The present case study was conducted at a private secondary school under the control of the MOE. The medium of instruction at this school is English, and the institution has an Administrative Board consisting of the school owner, who is also the General Manager, and members of an Educational Committee, which forms the top of the administrative hierarchy. Two Assistant General Managers, one responsible for the educational issues and the other for the administrative functions at the school, together with the principal are responsible to the Administrative Board. There are 106 (78 full-time and 28 part-time) teachers at the school employed through yearly contracts. The recruitment, selection and training stages are organised by a body consisting of the general manager, the principal, department heads and a group of experienced teachers.

According to the data received from the administration, most students in the school come from families whose first priority is a quality education and who are

able to bear a heavy financial burden to insure their children obtain that education. The school currently provides education to 1239 students in 1998-1999 academic year. Accepted class size is approximately 25 students. Students are admitted to the school based on the results of nationwide private school examinations.

Research method

Qualitative case study methods and procedures were used to explore the perceptions of MOE centralised instructional supervision. In general, case study methods are the preferred strategy when 'how,' or 'why' questions are uppermost in the researcher's mind, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. A qualitative case study sets out to describe that unit in depth, in detail, in context and holistically (Patton, 1987).

The participants of this study were the members of the administrative board (2), the principal, assistant heads (3 out of 6), department heads (all 6), and teachers (15 out of 78 full-time teachers). Teachers and assistant heads were chosen by stratified random sampling. The strata for the teachers included subject area, overall teaching experience, teaching experience in the school, gender and level being taught. One lowest, one middle and one highest level assistant head were selected for the purpose of representative sampling.

Three qualitative data collection techniques were used, namely interview, critical incident and the review of related documents. Interview schedules were designed for each subject group, i.e. members of the administrative board, the principal, assistant heads, department heads and teachers. The principal and the sampled teachers were also asked to write what they considered to be successful and unsuccessful supervisory experiences, using a critical incident form developed by the researcher.

The school documents reviewed included announcements, school leaflets, training programmes and administrative documents. These documents were analysed in order to generate supplementary data beyond that provided by the interviews and critical incidents.

The data collected through interviews and critical incidents were subjected to content analysis to determine patterns of perceptions and to examine the MOE inspection process. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) point out, data analysis is the systematic process of searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field-notes and other material that is accumulated by the researcher with a view to increasing the understanding of the data. The process enables the researcher to present what has been discovered to others. In this process, analysis involves

working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and, ultimately, deciding what relevant facts are to be presented. Thus, the data in this study were labelled using descriptive codes, thereby, simplifying the complexity into manageable units. The patterns were then identified on the basis of these labels, with the data being tabulated into broader categories. The major topics and themes helped to identify the concepts and the central ideas. During the write-up period, the results of the data analysis derived from the interviews and the critical incidents were integrated with the information obtained from the written documents. This permitted the researcher to draw a coherent picture of the perception of the MOE inspection process.

Results

Structure of the Ministry of Education inspection

At irregular intervals Ministry inspectors evaluate administrative issues and teachers' performance. On the basis of such evaluations, the inspectors determine the extent of the school's conformity to state-specified curriculum guidelines. The data reveal that during the administrative inspection the inspectors check curricular policies, general organisation and staff deployment, composition and organisation of the governing body, links with parents and outside bodies (such as MOE, Teacher Organisations, Educational Department of Universities and other schools), the pattern of staff and parents meetings, school activities and routines (including calendar of events, assessment and recording systems, departmental reports, examination results, student-related paperwork such as, 'dismissal papers'), staff evaluation and development arrangements and teacher induction and probation, and, lastly, school financial and management systems.

There is no specific frequency regarding the inspection of teacher performance. The school involved in this case-study had its last ministry inspection two years ago. Some teachers say they have had ministry inspection every two to three years, some every five years. Some teachers even mention that they have not been inspected in the last seven years. The discrepancy is due to variance between different groups of inspectors for different subject matter. If, for instance, Mathematics and Science Departments are inspected one year, English or Art Departments are more likely to be inspected the following year.

The data reveal that during a planned visit, inspectors tend to spend one or two weeks at the school. The inspection starts with an initial visit to the principal. After this meeting, the inspector sometimes has one meeting with the whole department.

The inspector may then conduct individual meetings with every teacher in that department. During the general meeting, s/he talks about the two areas of inspection: inspection of required paper work and class performance observation. The research data indicates that teachers mention that the inspectors require every teacher to have a file consisting of the pertinent papers, i.e. dictates of Ministerial Regulations Journal, yearly departmental syllabus, daily plan, grade notebook, example of exam papers, and graded papers. Teachers are also informed of the number of class visits. The intended schedule is to conduct two visits for those teachers who have less than five years' experience, and one visit for those teachers with more than five years' experience. During each visit one lesson is observed. Inspectors insist that the lesson observed should not consist of either class exercises or oral examination - inspectors generally like to observe class participation, but require teacher direction and control of that participation. After this general meeting the inspector meets individual teachers to decide the best time for the class visit. However, some inspectors fail to follow this procedure and begin their class visits immediately.

The data also indicate that different inspectors conduct the observation using different methods. Their strategy depends on whether they are subject-specific inspectors or not, as well as on their attitude towards the inspection. If the inspector is not a subject-specific one, s/he tends to focus on the general classroom atmosphere – such as lesson flow, student-teacher interaction and the teacher's ability to use different teaching techniques. The principal, assistant heads, department heads and the teachers generally note that subject-specific inspectors tend to take into account the teacher's knowledge of subject matter besides the quality of teaching. The data reveal that some inspectors interact with the class by asking questions related to the lesson. Some may, however, go beyond their prescribed role and attempt to teach the lesson, thereby, risking belittling the teacher in the eyes of the students.

The attitude of the inspector towards the teacher tends to be determined by the individual's personality. Some inspectors have a friendly and informal talk with the teacher before the inspection process, helping to calm nerves and establish a productive relationship. Others, however, were reported to treat the teacher in a condescending manner. This causes frustration and friction between the inspector and the teacher. To explain the situation one senior teacher stated that some inspectors are polite and they enter the class with the teacher. On the other hand, some do not care and enter the class even after the lesson has begun. They do not seem mindful of the fact that they disrupt the students' and the teacher's concentration.

The data further reveal that after the observation of the lesson, inspectors do not provide teachers with formal written feedback. At best, some inspectors give

informal verbal feedback – many just thank the teacher, leaving the classroom without any comment at all, particularly if they are generally satisfied with what they have observed. However, if the lesson has not gone particularly well, inspectors warn the teachers about the weak points. The data indicates that most teachers consider such points to be typically petty procedural matters. Indeed, teachers typically claim more constructive feedback sessions after the classroom observation. They feel inspectors should discuss both positive and negative aspects of their evaluations. Positive behaviors should be emphasised to encourage teachers and to elicit more commitment and more effective teaching. One teacher explained that it is difficult to discuss anything with inspectors, given that the latter adopt the role of superiors. Inspection is described as a ‘one-way street’ in which the inspector comes, observes, writes the report, but does not give the teacher a chance to participate in any of the evaluation process. A teacher commented that this was very much like a ‘secret agent’ assignment, in that one of the participants, the teacher, is not allowed to know what is going on before and/or after the inspection. However, a few teachers indicated that some inspectors have post-observation meetings with the members of the whole department and discuss the weaknesses, in general, and suggest better ways to handle the lessons.

The inspection yields two outcomes: a departmental grade, and individual teacher performance reports. The MOE’s final report, whether it be a positive or negative assessment, is cumulative of all assessments within the given department. It consists of a grade from zero to five and a written report to the MOE. This grade is announced at the general staff meeting by the principal. Ministry inspectors also fill out ‘State Civil Servant Personnel Reports’ before leaving the school. These reports are maintained in the MOE on each teacher. The principal indicates that the form is a standard government form used for the review of all civil servants, not a custom-made form meant solely for the teaching profession. The review sometimes results in positive consequences for teachers. One department head noted, for instance, that that if any teacher receives a ‘very good’ report, that teacher is rewarded with a ‘thank you’ letter from the MOE. If this occasion is repeated three times, the teacher is rewarded with one additional month’s salary, regardless of whether s/he teaches in a private or public school.

To sum up, the MOE inspection does not, in general, go any further than checking a few required documents and observing some of the teachers once or twice in the classroom setting. There is relatively little input from inspectors as to the teacher’s performance and how any observation data might be used to enhance the teacher’s performance. The results of this study indicate that the ministry inspectors rely on simplified definitions of evaluation, procedures and processes that have remained virtually unchanged on paper or in practice for years.

The data generated by the present study indicate that centralised teacher supervision is criticised firstly with regards the quality of inspectors, and secondly in terms of the nature of the process of supervision itself.

When considering prevalent characteristics of inspectors, teachers describe the latter as being 'perfectionist', 'judgmental' and ultimately 'incompetent'. Inspectors are seen to be domineering and judgemental, as if carrying out their observations from an 'ivory tower'. Teachers point out that inspectors, even though they were teachers at one time, have forgotten both the natural classroom setting and the problems related to teaching. They further state that rather than an evaluation, the review turns from the teacher's qualifications to what the inspector has done or can do. Some inspectors tend to dominate the discussions and even interfere with the lesson in progress. In the opinion of the teachers involved in this case-study, the system, as interpreted by the inspectors, encourages high inspector/low teacher involvement. Inspectors end up disturbing the class dynamics, causing irritation to teacher and students alike. One teacher noted that 'inspection is scary not only for teachers, but also for the students as well'.

Teachers find inspectors judgemental in that they gather information from the principal and then review teacher from a prejudiced point of view. To further support their allegation, teachers state that inspectors do not have a constructive attitude. One teacher explained: 'It is inevitable that the teachers are discouraged as a result of this process,' since 'it is unlikely that an inspector would like a lesson; they always, only, find something negative to say.' Further, inspectors are cited as being 'incompetent' in their subject matter and their inspection ability by the teachers, the department heads and the assistant heads. They do not seem to have enough relevant knowledge in the subject matter that they evaluate the teachers in. They have little, if any, fluency in English and the teachers do not understand how they can evaluate something that they cannot even comprehend. Teachers support their claim by stating that some teachers have attended in-service training and are aware of recent improvements in their field, whereas inspectors show little knowledge of the current state of teaching practices and methods. When considering inspection ability, inspectors are criticised for not following universally accepted inspection procedures. One teacher explained: 'To improve something there needs to be an efficient feedback system...however, today's inspectors evaluate judgmentally, and advice the teachers to do this or that, in general, after observation, which is neglected most of the times. The inspectors do not place any effort or importance on improving the method of instruction.'

Regarding the nature of MOE inspection, the process is viewed as summative rather than formative, and biased. It was pointed out that there are not enough

inspectors to perform a comprehensive review of school systems, which could provide formative evaluation. One assistant head, who had worked as a Ministry inspector, explained that when he was in the system, each inspector had 150 teachers to evaluate. He noted that there are only 85 working days in each school term, which is approximately half the number of teachers required to be inspected - and that it was therefore impossible for an inspector to fit in his or her quota of inspections within the number of days available. One teacher emphasised the fact that 'what the inspectors see is not the natural learning setting and the teaching context; they observe each teacher only once or twice during the teachers' tenure in the profession and the evaluation is seen as only synonymous with minimal observation.' Therefore, most of the teachers believe that ministry inspectors are easily deceived. For example, one teacher said that 'if a teacher wants, s/he can present a very different classroom image, which is acceptable to the inspectors. S/he might prepare a very attractive lesson that provides the inspector with what he expects and wants.' One department head shared the same feeling, saying: 'inspectors cannot judge the teacher within this short time frame and that justifies the schools having their own school-based evaluation system.' Another teacher expressed a similar view when he argued that inspection should not be done solely for the sake of fulfilling a required assignment. Each participant should benefit from the activity. The teachers feel that they are judged on certain traits, characteristics, styles or behaviours that are considered important by the MOE. Other issues important to the school and to the teachers are, generally speaking, ignored.

For these and other reasons, the present study clearly indicates that the teachers involved in this case study do not believe in the way the Ministry Inspection is currently carried out. Recently an additional issue has been raised in this regard: despite the fact that inspectors are expected to be impartial in their evaluation, focusing only on teacher performance, there are increasing doubts as to the ability of inspectors to keep their political and religious persuasions aside. Teachers also often noted that the MOE inspection system is far from being objective, with inspectors evaluating the teachers' class performance on the basis of ill-defined criteria. One teacher noted that inspectors give more importance to the papers rather than to the teacher's performance in class. She added that if a teacher does not happen to have one of the required documents - however insignificant - s/he is heavily criticised by the inspector.

In summary, the reliability of the total inspection system by the MOE is questionable. In its present form, the system serves little value other than to administratively say 'we are in compliance with the governmental requirements for inspections.' Those interviewed felt that since inspection is compulsory, the Ministry should take immediate and effective steps to ensure that those inspectors

who represent the MOE are competent and knowledgeable in whatever subject area they evaluate. The primary goal should be to maintain high standards for the sake of the public, the teachers, the students and even the inspectors themselves. Interviewees also expressed the view that inspectors should be familiar with the latest teaching techniques, and should be up-to-date regarding the particular subject being observed. Moreover, it was argued that the MOE should find a way to employ more inspectors so that more time could be devoted to each teacher in order to provide formative support to improve the quality of instruction. There seems to be an agreement that it would be wise to explore opportunities to link the ministry inspection with the school-based evaluation system, since this would considerably reduce the work load for both the ministry inspectors and the principals. Lastly, one of the teachers recommended that the MOE inspection system should not be tied to the government offices, but should be an independent unit under the responsibility of the President.

Impact of the Ministry of Education inspection

Most teachers expressed the view that there is relatively little impact of the inspection process on the teaching and learning context. They resent MOE inspection and they see it as a non-academic exercise, a hindrance to their class time and a waste of their energies. They also consider that the reliance of the school administration on MOE inspection as a basis for supplemental information regarding teacher performance is highly questionable.

In some instances, however, inspection reports filed with the MOE are deemed to have positive results. These forms, though administrative, acknowledge individual teacher performance when this is deserved. This acknowledgment is shown by the issuance of letters of outstanding performance. The school recognises these letters as an achievement on the teachers' part and does give credit for having received such documents during the contract renewal period.

One could also argue that, despite the criticism on the part of teachers, the MOE does play a positive if limited role in the evaluation of teachers, thereby contributing to school development. School administrators prepare extensively and place a great deal of importance on passing the inspection. The exercise enhances the school's ability to ensure accountability to the major stakeholders. However, this inspection tends to only cater for the administrative auditing of the school. As teachers generally pointed out, it has little impact on teacher improvement. The stated role of MOE is to improve and maintain minimal educational levels. However, due to either staffing and/or lack of direction within the MOE, it fails to foster a strategy leading to competent teacher improvement programmes. It serves only to ensure that school administrative documents are in the required order.

Discussion

For the most part, it would seem that MOE inspection provides little, if any, methodological feedback and instruction for improvement to individual teachers. The summative nature of the existing inspection system detracts from any structural formative possibilities to improve instruction (Oliva, 1989). As suggested earlier, this relates directly to both the number and the quality of inspectors available. Currently, the MOE employs only 310 inspectors to evaluate 140,000 secondary school teachers. Of course, this results in difficulties for the inspection system. Given that those visits to schools are multi-faceted, including interviews with principals, assistant heads and teachers, as well as inspections of documentation over and above classroom visits, it is no wonder that follow-up assessments and formative advice receive little priority. The MOE authorities state that they can employ 200 more inspectors. They cannot, however, fill the vacant positions due to the high expectations in the current selection criteria and procedures. The pre-1993 inspectors still make up between 70 to 80% of active inspectors (Ministry of Education Board of Inspectors Regulation, 1993). Moreover, the motivation behind being an inspector for the MOE is questionable, especially when the heavy workload these inspectors are expected to shoulder is taken into account.

To be able to evaluate performance, one needs to observe action in a number of settings and at various intervals. Given the number of inspectors, frequency of teacher inspection might – at best – occur once in three years. This inspection lasts anywhere from 15 to 40 minutes. In such circumstances, it is doubtful whether the MOE inspection can fulfil its summative function, let alone any formative ones. Despite this, reports are generated purporting to reflect the situation in schools and classrooms. Such reports can have little, if any, impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Turkey has undertaken the long road to integration into the European Union. In doing so it has to face the prospect that to be 'within Europe is to rank on the same statistical indicators of Europe' (Gomes, 1996). The social character of Turkey is one of a 'Mediterranean reality' (Sultana, 1996) which shares a common history and climate with all of the other states bordering on the 'White Sea', as the Mediterranean is called in Turkey. Like most of the other Mediterranean basin states, Turkey has centralised government services. The experience of several other countries with centralised systems is that reform is necessary in order to attain teacher accountability. The classical French system, the spirit of which is reflected in Turkey, tends to nurture a body of civil servants who fail to adopt a progressive attitude. This system perpetuates itself and advances either politics or personal desires. In theory the school system is supposed to be non-political and secular; in reality, however, formal education is used by the political parties

in power to promote not only their own agendas, but also their own people through favouritism. For the issues discussed thus far, it is the opinion of the author that two alternatives for improvement may be viable: one must either alter the system, adopting a practice similar to that currently used in England, or alternatively make a commitment to increasing the importance of school-based supervision where formative issues are central to the process.

Implementation of the first alternative would involve placing an inspection division under an independent agency reporting directly to the office of the President. As in the English system, the inspection would be performed by independent inspector teams contracted by the agency. This would promote professionalism among inspectors, removing them from the civil servant realm. Change is difficult and can only be accomplished by attrition in stages, i.e. as inspectors retire. While phasing out the civil service sector, the new agency would take over a district at a time with the private contractors. It could certainly be argued that such a programme would cost more than that currently in place. That is probable true, but one could also argue that Turkey cannot afford to continue in the same mode if it is to match the education indicators that prevail in Europe. The return on such an investment would manifest itself in two ways: improved teacher assessment, from both a formative and a summative point of view; and improved learning, which is the natural consequence of improved teaching.

The other alternative would involve school administrators (i.e. principals, assistant heads and department heads) more directly and thoroughly in formative supervision. Their proximity to the individual teachers on a day-to-day basis provides them with the opportunity to develop professional relationships with teaching staff, to gauge the personal and professional needs of teachers, to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and to build a team spirit where the goal is improvement rather than inspection for its own sake. This alternative favours decentralisation, with government possibly instituting continued education programmes in order to certify school administrators for their new role. One obvious advantage would be that over 9500 more personnel – a calculation based on the number of secondary schools within the current school system – would be available to carry out supervision and assessment.

In general, the MOE must find a balance between monetary constraints and the needs of a burgeoning educational system. There is surely no place for waste – either of energy or of funds. Cost-effectiveness and value-for-money in education is vital if one is to ensure that future generations are provided for with an improved educational service. Failure to develop an adequate teacher supervision system can only lead to stagnation. It is through the constant improvement of teacher effectiveness in classrooms that progress in educational quality for all can be attained.

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