

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE CLASSROOM INSPECTION PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Abstract: Research aims to identify the attitudes of middle school teachers and school principals on lecture inspections. This research uses case study research design. The data collection tool was used in interviews because it aimed to help principals access more extensive data in relation to the comments of middle school teachers on lecture inspection. The study group of the research was five teachers working in different branches of the Buca Otuken Middle School in the academic year 2016-2017. The sample in the research was determined with convenience sampling. The data for the research were obtained through the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers after a literature review. The validity of the interview form used in obtaining research data was considered stepwise in terms of criteria. The findings on the comments of the teachers in the school in which the research was performed on lecture inspections by principals. The findings are considered separately as sub-problems. In the first sub-problem, we aimed to establish the expectations of the school principal in terms of duties and competence. The participants were asked to list the duties and competences they expected. In the second sub-problem, the participants were asked about their opinion of the leadership role of the school principal during inspections. The participants desire a principal who is a constructive leader who can control the style and level of criticism. In the third sub-problem, the teachers were asked for their opinions on the evaluation and feedback style of the school principal after inspection. The duration should be determined based on the teacher. As a leader, the school principal should be aware of this duration with each teacher.

Keywords: School principals, lecture inspections, middle school, teachers' views.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of productivity, seen as one of the greatest dead-ends of today's educational systems, affects teachers and responsible individuals and institutions within the process of their development and inspection. The development and inspection of teaching and the effort to make it more efficient lie in the basis of the development and inspection of the teacher. This effort shows differences in every school in each educational system in each term based on varying conditions in each locality.

Inspection mechanisms are focused in different ways and with different implementations. Each educational system constructs the inspection mechanism in accordance with their own characteristics for the purpose of determining whether their own aims are realized or not. The aims of the Turkish educational system are protected by laws and codes and strive to determine the level of reaching mission attainment in terms of the related laws and regulations. For this purpose, the Legislative Decree on the Organization and Tasks of the National Education Ministry is in force and carries out the inspection.

Uncertainties in the Turkish educational system are particularly observed in the area of inspection. The stages of the inspection process, how and by whom the inspection will be carried out within the frame of which authorities and responsibilities have been a subject of discussion for years. The inspection mechanism, starting with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, has brought into force many implementations in the educational system and created efforts to inspect the operability of the system. According to Memduhoglu and Taymur (2014, 29), most of the studies conducted regarding educational inspection in Turkish educational system have discovered that important problems have been detected in the system, the inspection process has not proceeded in the direction of the desired targets, they could not manage to develop the teaching process (one of their main objectives) and the professional skills of the teacher and the inspectors were not adequate for carrying out the tasks and responsibilities expected from them. Educational politicians, becoming aware of the problems in the inspection processes over the last a few years, conducted modifications in the laws

and regulations and tried to make the inspection functional and valid. For this reason, at the end of many modifications conducted from the 1990s up to today, the current inspection system of the Ministry of National Education has taken its final form within the frame of "Law on Making Amendments in the National Education Basic Law and Some Laws and Legislative Decrees" and "Regulation on Guidance for the National Education Ministry and Inspection Department and Regulation of the Department of Education Inspectors." The amendments made on the dates specified in these laws and regulations have partly removed uncertainty about the frame within which principles and methods will be implemented and by whom institution inspection and teacher inspection will be conducted (Altun 2014, 27).

Currently, the inspection system of the Ministry of National Education is executed by the Department of Education Inspectorate within the body of the Directorate for Guidance and Inspection, the Directorate for Internal Auditing and Provincial Directorates of National Education (MEB 2014). The amendment to the Organizational Regulation of the Ministry of National Education on August 20, 2017 changed "Directorate for Guidance and Inspection" to "Department of Inspection Board". The fundamental duty of the Department of Inspection Board is to carry out, in collaboration with relevant units, the control and inspection processes of services offered by or under the control of the Ministry, analyze, compare and measure processes and results on the basis of the regulations, pre-determined aims and objectives, performance criteria and quality standards, evaluate these processes and results in an evidence-based manner, and report results to the relevant units and persons (MEB 2017). The primary duty of the Directorate for Internal Auditing is to inspect the activities and operations of all units of the Ministry including central, provincial and overseas units, carry out economic, effective and efficient management of the resources of the Ministry, perform financial, system and performance inspections, inspect information technologies, carry out inspection and counseling activities based on approval by the internal inspection plan and annual program, carry out inspections and counseling activities requested by the top executives, evaluate the

effectiveness and adequacy of risk management, internal control and governance processes of the Ministry, and execute duties assigned by relevant laws and regulations (MEB 2014b). The primary duty of Education Inspectors is to plan and execute the guidance, inspection, research, examination and investigation services of organizations in the province (MEB 2014).

All these regulations are put into force and practice in order that inspections increase the productivity of schools and to create a more productive and effective education system. Inspections aim to develop education, and thus the teacher who delivers it, and to guide him in his role. According to Basar (1996, 1), the objective of inspection is to correct and develop educational activities and processes in the attainment of educational goals. According to Aydin (2005), it is a technical and social process designed to effectively use and develop human and material resources. According to Oz (2003), the most important objective of inspection is to offer help to the teacher when he needs it most (Ceylan and Agaoglu 2014, 545).

Types of inspection are mainly institution inspection, lecture inspection and internal inspection. The type of inspection that is given priority in the development of teaching is teacher inspection (Altun 2014, 32). Development of teaching is only possible through developing the teacher. For this reason, inspectors should have all the qualifications that will offer opportunities to help and guide teachers and satisfy needs. In this context, lecture inspections should be carried out with ultimate care and be effective in guiding teachers. Firstly, the concept of lecture inspection should be examined and internalized by inspectors and evaluations and guidance should be carried out accordingly. Taymaz (1984, 9) defines lecture inspection as the action that is performed to observe the behavior of the teacher during both teaching and the periods when he is interacting with students and to examine and evaluate pre-lecture and post-lecture activities in an educational institution.

Burgaz (1992, 2) argued that the objective of lecture inspections is to evaluate and develop the process of teaching and learning as a whole while examining all the active elements within the process and the continuous interactions between them (Dagli 2000, 44).

The school administrator is viewed as being the primary authority responsible for controlling and evaluating the teaching process in schools (Bursalioglu 2012, 34). In other words, the primary responsibility of school principals can be expressed as leadership in education and employee evaluation (Donmez 2002). In this context, the key point in inspections is the inspection by the school principal of teaching and, by implication, of the teachers. Similarly, according to Basar (1996, 2), the majority of the inspection should be performed by the school administration; inspectors should not spend too much time on this task. The entry point of this situation is that principals have been assigned the role of teaching leader in recent years. As the teaching leader, the principal inspects the in-class teaching activity of the teacher and plans actions to improve it (Yilmaz 2009, 24).

School principals' behaviors and approaches significantly affect the success of teachers. Restrictive administrator behaviors, unlike supportive behaviors, maintain a negative relationship with various dimensions of a collaborative school culture and thus prevent its evolution towards a more collaborative environment. In particular, these two main categories of behavior are very important, especially when considering collaborative leadership and professional development. Also, supportive basic behaviors were positively associated with peer support; this could mean that basic behaviors provide a model for the behavior of other employees and perhaps students (Tlusciak-Deliowska, Dernowska and Steve Gruenert, 2017, 20).

Additionally, the inspection duty of the school principal is expressed by the Regulations on Primary Education Institutions as: "The principal is responsible for administering, evaluating and improving the school on the basis of its objectives" (MEB 2003). In this case, it can be said that the principal is responsible for lecture inspections in both formal and informal terms.

On that basis, this research aims to identify the attitudes of middle school teachers and school principals on lecture inspections. To this end, the research seeks to find answers to the following sub-problems;

1. What is the expectation from the school principals in terms of duties and competence?
2. What kind of leader should the school principal be throughout the process of inspection?
3. What style of evaluation and feedback should the school principal adopt throughout the process of inspection?

METHOD

This research uses case study, which is a qualitative research design. Case study is a methodological approach that involves an in-depth study of a restricted system using multiple data collection to gather systematic information about how and how it works (Chmiliar 2010). The data collection tool was used in interviews because it aimed to help principals access more extensive data in relation to the comments of middle school teachers on lecture inspection. The study group, data collection tool and validity and

reliability of the data collection tool are explained in detail below.

STUDY GROUP

The study group of the research was five teachers working in different branches of the Buca Otuken Middle School in the academic year 2016-2017. The School that the study is carried has 21 teachers and 350 students in Izmir City Center. Parents have low socio economical class and educational status. There are approximately 20 or 22 students in each class, which makes the atmosphere suitable for effective classroom management. The sample in the research was determined with convenience sampling. This sampling was preferred because it is fast and convenient for the researcher (Yildirim and Simsek 2000). The study group included teachers from different branches of the school who volunteered to support the research and present their opinions. Information on the teachers from which the research data were obtained is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The Study Group

Teacher Code	Gender	Age	Branch	Duration of Service	Educational Background
T1	Female	36	Music	11	Undergraduate
T2	Female	42	Visual Arts	19	Undergraduate
T3	Female	29	Turkish	5	Undergraduate
T4	Female	33	Physical Science	6	Undergraduate
T5	Male	36	Social Science	10	Undergraduate

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The data for the research were obtained through the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers after a literature review. The interview form was re-arranged after a pilot application with two teachers and then the real application was carried out. The semi-structured interview form used in the qualitative research conducted to obtain thorough

information about the lecture inspections of principals from the teachers included five questions to determine their opinions on the lecture inspections of the principals, their thoughts on attendance of support and improvement training courses, what type of leadership the school principals adopt during the

process of inspection and what style of evaluation and feedback the principals adopt.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The validity of the interview form used in obtaining research data was considered stepwise in terms of criteria. The first was participation confirmation by the teachers whose opinions were sought. It was essential that the teachers included in the study group participated voluntarily, and they were informed that their answers would remain confidential. The other criterion was that the interview data would be obtained by extensive face-to-face interviews with participants. Additionally, it was an

important criterion that the interview form be confirmed by an expert. To meet this criterion, three teachers who were experts in the subject

and a linguistics teacher were consulted for their opinions and the interview form modified in accordance with their comments.

FINDINGS

This section contains the findings on the comments of the teachers in the school in which

the research was performed on lecture inspections by principals. The findings are considered separately as sub-problems.

FINDINGS ON THE FIRST SUB-PROBLEM

The first sub-problem of the research was “What duties and what type of competence are expected from the school principal as an inspector?”. The opinions of the participants are given in Table 2 as a theme and in categories.

Table 2. Theme of Opinions of Participants on Expected Duties and Competences of the School Principal as an Inspector

Categories	f
Leader as a teacher; principal as a listener	4
Management while keeping in mind that he used to be a teacher	2
Management while putting aside ego	2
Giving priority to the inspection of teaching	2

Examining Table 2, it can be seen that the top expectation of the principal is equal treatment of everyone. Primarily, the teachers want him to adhere to the principle of equality. A participant expressed this opinion:

T5: "The school principal should be at an equal distance from all the teachers and be fair when making an evaluation. The evaluation should be objective for each teacher. This is what I expect from our school principal during an inspection” In addition, one of the greatest issues of teachers is that while carrying out their duties the principals forget that they are also teachers and

act like a boss, and this situation was also observed here. A participant who has problems with this said: T2: "I want school principals to remember that they were once teachers too and make their evaluations accordingly. After all, they also went through the same experiences in classes. I think they should be able to empathize.” In the context of the first sub-problem, the opinions of the participants on the inspector role of their principal taken in order to present how the principal is perceived to fulfill this role are given in Table 3 as a sub-theme and in categories.

Table 3. Theme of Opinions of Participants on Fulfilment of Inspector Duties by Their School Principal

Categories	f
Inappropriateness of single-lecture inspection	4
Inspection of different classes at different times	2
Inadequacy of the principal for inspecting	2

Examining Table 3, it can be seen that most of the participants were not content with single-lecture inspections by their principal. It was observed that they were uncomfortable with the fact that the inspections were only carried out in one class. They argued that teachers should be evaluated in all aspects including in-class and out-of-class activities. A participant with this opinion said:

T4: "I do not find it right to perform the inspection only on one lecture in a term. I do not think this kind of inspection is effective. He should observe and analyze the efforts throughout the year and make evaluations accordingly." Additionally, the participants stated that the inspections differed from class to class and lecture to lecture. For this reason, they suggested that it would be more appropriate to observe and evaluate a teacher in various classes and at various times rather than in a single lecture. They stated that inspections would differ according to class climate and student-teacher interaction and hence each teacher would perform differently in each class.

Moreover, they emphasized that principals should have the properties and competence of an inspector. A participant with this opinion stated: T1: "I expect the principal who is to be an inspector to have professional competence. The principal should know how and on what aspects to inspect a teacher during and after inspection and how to provide feedback. It would not be correct for him to evaluate and make a judgment about me without knowing this. I expect him to be competent in areas where he warns me and to apply what he knows in the best way possible."

FINDINGS ON THE SECOND SUB-PROBLEM

The second sub-problem was "What type of a leader should the school principal be during the process of inspection?" to determine the opinions of the participants on the leadership roles of school principals during lecture inspections. The opinions of the participants are given in Table 4 as a theme and in categories.

Table 4. Theme of Opinions of Participants on Leadership Role of School Principals during Lecture Inspections

Categories	f
Leader as a teacher; principal as a listener	1
A leader who can balance style and level of criticism	2
A leader who does not simply perform leadership with the inspection chart provided	1
A leader who does not forget his prior teaching position and empathizes	1

Examining Table 4, the most desired leadership role from the principal was that of a leader who pays attention to the style and level of criticism. The teachers want the principal to use constructive language in criticism during and after inspection and not make the inspections too long. A participant with this opinion said: T2: "When evaluating teachers, the principal should control the tone of criticism properly and be constructive not destructive. He should not exceed the use of leadership powers. When negatively criticized for too long, teachers may become lower in performance." Additionally, one of the participants stated that the principal should be a passive listener and observer during inspections. Another participant said that if he

simply follows the inspection chart, he cannot exhibit the leadership role expected from a school principal. The participant said that while it is possible to make a healthy evaluation through the existing chart, a principal who is confined by the format during inspection and evaluation cannot be a leader with independent thinking and observation.

FINDINGS ON THE THIRD SUB-PROBLEM

The third sub-problem of the research was "What style of evaluation and feedback should the school principal adopt throughout the process of inspection?". The opinions of the participants on the evaluation style of the school principals are given in Table 5 as a theme and in categories.

Table 5. Theme of Opinions of Participants on the Evaluation Style of School Principals

Categories	f
Inappropriateness of use of the same charts obtained online and applied to all branches	4
Appropriateness of the evaluation method he uses	1

Examining Table 5, most participants did not find the method the school principal used during inspection to be correct. According to the participants, the charts downloaded online are not a good way to make a valid and reliable evaluation after inspection. Moreover, they said that each branch should be evaluated with different criteria. A participant with this opinion stated:

T4: "I find it incorrect to inspect all the branches with charts downloaded from the internet and not prepared specifically for a branch. Our principal used the same chart both in English and Visual Arts classes. This is wrong." In the context of the third sub-problem, the opinions of the participants on the feedback style of their principal are given in Table 6 as a sub-theme and in categories.

Table 6. Theme of Opinions of Participants on the Feedback Style of School Principal

Categories	f
Positive feedback from the school principal	4
Feedback duration too long	3
Criticism too long	1
Failings of giving feedback from a checked list	1

In Table 6, the majority of the participants said that the feedback style of the school principal was positive. It is essential for the principal to provide feedback to teachers after an inspection. In this process, it is a key element in whether the teacher will develop a positive or negative attitude to feedback. The participants were also aware of this situation and said that the style of feedback is essential. One of the participants with this opinion stated: T3: "Feedback after inspection is important for me. Of course, it is more important how the principal does it. The feedback of the school principal after inspection was positive and constructive."

Additionally, while the participants find the style positive, they also found it boring that the principal evaluated each behavior and activity for too long. The participants argued that feedback should be brief and would be more effective this way. A participant with this opinion said: T4: "...however, it was really too much when it took two hours for the feedback after inspection. After a while, too many unnecessary details became boring and ineffective. I think it would be more efficient if it was shorter and brief."

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The teaching profession is in the limelight at an unprecedented level due to social, political and professional debates. This may be because teachers have a pessimistic vision of their profession. Wear-out is a huge challenge for teachers to be motivated. It can be thought to be related to workplace satisfaction, long-term training plans and professional visions that will increase their motivation to work (Katalin and Toth 2016). Inspection mechanisms that should

be present at every level of teaching differ between countries, among education systems, and from time to time. All education systems are in search of an inspection mechanism that is appropriate for them. The current applications serve the purpose of establishing whether teaching is done in accordance with its objectives. The Turkish Education System has struggled to make the inspection mechanism functional with laws and regulations. It creates and implements different applications based on the needs of the era and the system. According to Item 43 of the Ministry of National Education Elementary Education Inspectors Presidency Regulation, the role of lecture inspection that falls under the on-the-job training statement on the definition of duties and authorization of inspectors gave the role of lecture inspections to school principals after a modification in 2014 – although it was also the responsibility of school principals prior to the modification it was carried out by inspector. This has positive and negative aspects from the point of view of teachers. In order to determine the negative and positive aspects of lecture inspections by school principals, the teachers were asked what role and competence they expected of principals in inspection, how they think the principal fulfilled this inspector role and what they think the feedback and evaluation style of the principal should be.

In the first sub-problem, we aimed to establish the expectations of the school principal in terms of duties and competence. The participants were asked to list the duties and competences they expected. The participants primarily expected their principal to behave in accordance with the principle of equality. They worry that since the principal is always at school, he develops

personal relationships. This is reflected in the inspection and evaluation process and these conditions do not allow for an objective and appropriate inspection. The school principals are expected to put aside their administrative roles and personal relationships to become an inspector and evaluate the inspections in an equal manner. Additionally, they believe that the principals should not forget that they were once teachers when they execute their duties as inspectors and administrators. Teachers did not find it acceptable that principals bring their self-centered personal attitudes to their positions as administrators.

Another emphasis of the teachers was that inspections should not be of teachers but students. The principals should use inspection mechanisms not to inspect teachers but to advance education. The main objective in inspections should be to improve learning and the evaluation should be of teaching.

In the context of the first sub-problem, the participants were asked for opinions about the fulfilment of the inspector role by the school principal. The participants viewed it as wrong that the principal inspected a single lecture and commented on the data obtained within this short period of time to identify the performance of the teacher. They argued that activities throughout the term should not be evaluated within a single class. They stated that inspections of teachers in different classes and lectures would give more reliable results. They said that the behavior of teachers might vary among classes, among lectures and from time to time. For this reason, the school principal should not carry out inspections based on data observed in a single lecture. In addition, he should have the qualifications of an inspector.

The teachers believe that the school principal should be more competent than themselves in both administration and inspection. According to Banasiak and Karczmarzyk (2018, 36), the most beneficial skills for teachers in today's educational reality seem to be the ability to react quickly to changes, to develop qualifications and to use constantly evolving technology. Management competencies are also important. All these competencies are not enough only with inspections and studies. At the same time, adult education should be maintained and provided. In today's world, society needs teachers as a manager and as leaders. Every teacher should

have the managerial competencies to adapt to new world educational standards.

In the second sub-problem, the participants were asked about their opinion of the leadership role of the school principal during inspections. The participants desire a principal who is a constructive leader who can control the style and level of criticism. They said that priority in inspection should be given to style and intensity of evaluation. They believe the principal should pay attention to this as a leader. Additionally, they pointed out that if he simply marks an inspection chart, he does not display the qualifications of a leader and cannot manage the process as a good leader. Moreover, a point made by many teachers was that the principal forgets that he used to be a teacher and cannot empathize. Hence, principals should be able to empathize with the teacher and evaluate based on their own experiences. Another point of view was that the real leader during an inspection is the teacher and that the principal should be a passive listener.

In the third sub-problem, the teachers were asked for their opinions on the evaluation and feedback style of the school principal after inspection. The majority of the participants found the chart downloaded online to be insufficient and believed it should be prepared specifically for each branch. They argued that a different inspection chart should be prepared for the requirements of each class and that the inspections should be based on the headlines in these charts. In brief, each class has different expectations, requirements, outputs and class management, and inspections with a stereotyped chart would both harm the process of inspection and weaken the inspector quality of the school principal. Inspection by framework indicators cannot be a method that will improve either the principal or the teacher.

In the context of the third sub-problem, opinions on the feedback style after inspections were requested. The participants stated that the school principal had a positive attitude in the feedback stage. It can be seen that the feedback stage is one of key points of the inspection process from the point of view of participants. The participants do seek feedback but they care about the way the feedback is provided. The kind of tone the school principal uses while giving feedback is very important. When this approach is constructive, the prejudices on inspections will disappear and the teachers will be more open to improvement

with inspection, evaluation and guidance. However, one thing the participants all agreed on was that the feedback took too long. The teachers were aware of the inspection processes and thought that evaluation of activities should be relatively brief. They believed that this would help in arriving at more efficient conclusions and making decisions faster. A longer and more detailed process does not mean a more efficient process. The duration should be determined based on the teacher. As a leader, the school principal should be aware of this duration with each teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the suggestions of the participants, the researchers developed the following recommendations for school principals to improve lecture inspections:

- Platforms on which principals and teachers can present the two sides of inspection
- In order to eliminate prejudices in inspections, evaluation and guidance can be given weight within the inspection process.
- School principals can be trained in modern inspection approaches and applications.
- Workshops can be organized to enable both teachers and school principals to properly manage the inspection process in collaboration with each other.

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