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Tuncay Yavuz Ozdemir

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Tuncay Yavuz Ozdemir, Firat University, Turkey. (e-mail: tyavuz23@gmail.com)

Assigning Course Supervision to School Principals from Educational Supervisors: Effects on Teachers

TUNCAY YAVUZ OZDEMIR

Abstract

The inspectional structure of the National Education System in Turkey changed with a regulation which came into force in 2015, which passed school principals the responsibility for teachers' course control. The primary purpose of this study is to reveal teacher opinions on the new implementation which emerged from the change in the supervisory system. The study group consists of branch teachers for this study under the qualitative research method. Results indicate that supervision conducted by both supervisors and principals is not perfect. However, when considered generally, teachers find the supervision carried out by the principals to be positive. The results emphasize that there should be a standard for the supervisions conducted by principals and ethical codes should be set for objective/unbiased teacher supervision. It was also observed that course supervision competences of school principals are not at the desired levels; thus, school principals should be trained on supervision.

Keywords: teacher supervision, principal, teacher opinions.

Introduction

Educational organizations are one of the crucial variables in integrating qualified individuals to enable social sustainability in a society. Supervision of educational institutions, which are crucial in establishing the more prosperous of societies and the passing down of cultural heritage to future generations, is important in sustaining organizational effectiveness and in determining the level of organizational achievement. Rizzo (2004) emphasized the importance of the supervision system in organizational sustainability and referred to it as constantly following an organizations' level of realizing their reasons for being. In other words, supervision is vital for the effectiveness and sustainability of organizations. Sullivan and Glanz (2005) define supervision as the process of authorities observing whether or not organizational processes are carried out conveniently through legal legislation.

As with all concepts, the term 'supervision' has been defined differently over time. It was initially defined as rigorously reading a text so as to detect the errors in the text content (Sullivan & Glanz, 2005). Supervision, which was considered as a motivational tool for the professional development of teachers at the beginning of the 20th century (Smith & Speer, 1938), was concretized by Elsbree, McNally, and Wynn (1967) as an instructional development tool (as cited in Ozcan, 2014). Glickman (1990) defines supervision as assistance given to teachers and a tool to improve both the teacher and the teaching process. Parallel with changes occurring over time, it can also be considered that the primary beneficiaries of supervision are students and as an educational service offered to teachers so as to improve the teaching process (Oliva & Pawlas 2004).

It is better to evaluate the meanings attributed to concepts together with the realities of the era. It is evident that the term supervision was under the effect of scientific administration while being defined in earlier times. However, today, definitions prioritizing human and universal values are being made. Inspectional actions, which were carried out for correction and control at the beginning, are today considered as professional support given to teachers in order to increase the quality of educational activities (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). It is evident in this definition that supervision is a professional service which helps educational activities achieve their goals and prevents organizations diverge from these goals, which assists workers in maintaining their professional development and which guides the whole organization towards their organizational goals.

Supervision, which is vital for organizations, aims at; determining the level of achievement of organizational goals and promoting a constant development in this direction (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000). By attaining these goals, schools will become effective schools. In other words, the success of workers and the administrative units can be promoted through supervision (Taymaz, 2003; Kartal & Kocabas, 2014; Sahin, 2014).

The stages of supervision are situation determination, evaluation, and correction-development (Basar, 1995). The overriding task is to determine whether or not the processes generated within the organization are parallel with the pre-determined organizational goals and that probable malfunctions are uncovered. The reasons for such malfunctions and their resolutions should be specified (Acar, 1993). In the evaluations stage, the impacts against achievement of organizational goals are determined (Aydin, 2005). In the final correction and development stage, the options which have been decided upon during the evaluation stage are implemented (Bursalioglu, 2002).

Specific responsibilities are assigned to supervisors for the task of ensuring effective supervision. Supervisors are responsible for the supervision of school administration, the educational program and educational activities. Whilst performing these duties, supervisors should undertake roles such as planner, organizer, evaluator, motivator, communicator and decision-maker (Beach & Reinhartz, 1989). Based on the changes and developments, Oliva and Pawlas (2004) determined the role of a supervisor to be coordinator, counselor, group leader and evaluator. The competences of those carry out these supervisory roles were stated as precision, having analytic skills, program, instruction and communication expertise and social responsibility (Mosher & Purpel, 1972). In their study, Kartal, Karakose, Ozdemir, and Yirci (2011) stated that supervisors; should be fair, shouldn't malfeasance, be honest, have capacity for empathy, communicate effectively, be objective and scientific, be graceful and respectful, have professional knowledge, offer effective and sufficient guidance and be open to innovation.

The first supervision implementations in the Turkish educational system were observed during the Ottoman Reform. Educational supervision in the Turkish educational system was found necessary for the first time in the draft law concerning local schools in 1838 and officials were tasked to increase the professional competences of the teachers working in these schools (Taymaz, 2010). In regulations published in 1847, supervision was determined as a service for assisting teachers, and the supervisor was determined as the person who assists and guides teachers in carrying out educational activities (Aydin, 2007). Improvements in educational supervision were made constantly throughout time in the Turkish educational system so as to grasp what is the best. The final change in educational supervision took its final form in the "Ministry of National Education Regulation for Teacher Appointment and Promotion", published in the Official Journal on April 17, 2015. Course supervision in the Turkish education system was assigned to school principals from supervisors with this regulation which is still in act.

This study aims at determining the effects of this change in the Turkish education system on teachers. Thus, answers for the following research questions were sought:

- After assigning the duty and authority of course supervision to school principals, were there any changes in the attitudes and behaviors of teacher before, during and after the lessons?
- Did the supervision carried out by school principals lead to any changes in the supervision-pressure on teachers?

Methodology

The qualitative research method was adopted in this study in order to collect deeper information by taking into consideration the problem status. Qualitative research is a method which involves qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis and which follows the process in the natural setting of perceptions and events through a realistic and integrative way (Yildirim, 1999). It is effective to use the interview technique to understand the meanings attributed to emotions, thoughts, intentions and concepts (Patton, 2015). Thus, the interview technique of qualitative research methods was used based on the goals of this study.

The participants of this study were determined through the purposeful sampling method because it enables the study of qualitative data more deeply. According to Maxwell

(2005), the most important factor in determining the participants for qualitative studies is to select people who would give the most satisfying answers. The study group consists of 39 branch teachers in Turkey. Necessary corrections were made on the five interview questions prepared by the researcher based on expert opinions and were used as the data collection instrument.

Participant opinions were examined one-by-one, opinions which were explained insufficiently or were inappropriate with the study goals were deemed invalid. The valid interview forms were coded as "G1, G2, G3,..., G39" and transcribed to the computer. The data were analyzed through content analysis processes. Participant opinions were placed under categories after the categories were set. Finally, connections were made and the rotation processes were completed on the findings. Various concepts resulting from the analyses on the findings were modelled so as to reflect the relationship among them. Significant participant opinions were presented by staying loyal to their original form.

For the reliability of the study, expert opinions were resorted to determine whether or not participant opinions were parallel with the category they were placed under. At this point, the accepted participant opinions were asked to be placed under the categories without leaving any of the participant opinions out. The formula introduced by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) was used to determine study reliability:

$$\text{Percentage of Agreement (P)} = \frac{\text{Agreement (Na)}}{\text{Agreement (Na)} + \text{Disagreement (Nb)}} \times 100$$

There are views stating that for study reliability, the percentage of agreement should be above 70% (Miles et al., 2013) or 90% (Saban, 2004). Experts, who were tasked to test the study reliability, placed two opinions under different categories from the researchers. With this respect, the reliability of the study was calculated as $P = 21 / (21 + 3) \times 100 = \sim 91\%$.

Findings

With regards to the study goals, the participants were asked whether or not supervision carried out by school principals had any effects on the participants being prepared for their lessons. All participant opinions were found to be valid and were categorized under three different titles. Participants stated that after the supervisions were carried out by school principals, they were more careful in attending classes on time, unlike with educational supervisors, because the school principal could enter the class at any time they attended their lessons well-prepared. In addition, some participants stated that they didn't experience the negative events or negative communication settings which occurred with educational supervisors during the supervisions carried out by school principals, and underlined that this helped their internal motivations to increase. Participants' opinions, which can be summarized like this, indicate that supervision by school principals positively affects teachers to be prepared for lessons; and a total of 11 participant opinions were in this direction. 11 participants stated that no changes occurred in their lesson preparations after the change made in course supervisions. Participants expressing these opinions stated that; they are always prepared for their lessons, that being prepared for the lessons is a conscientious responsibility and that it should be as a result of the respect towards the profession of teaching. Participants also stated that the chance of communication problems that occur or can occur during supervision, and the fact that the actual classroom setting can be concealed during supervisions were effective in their opinions. Participant opinions which can be

summarized like this were categorized as supervisions made by school principals have no effects on teachers to be prepared for lessons. Other participants stressed that course supervisions made by school principals contribute to resolving the special problems they encounter during the lessons and them being more ordinate with regards to being prepared for the lessons. They stated that their motivations increased as a result of the supervisions being carried out by their institutions' administrators and that being prepared for lessons is a primary duty of teachers, but this issue drew more attention after the change in the supervision system. 17 different participant opinions which can be summarized like this were categorized as supervisions made by school principals partly affect teachers to be prepared for lessons. Examples of outstanding opinions expressed by the participants on this question in the interview form are given below, along with the information about the category they were placed under.

G1: Yes, it was effective. Teachers can be more prepared for the course when school principals join the lesson. I was even more motivated when my school principal came to my lesson. I was more prepared for my lesson. I wanted active participation from the students. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Had Positive Effect on Teachers Being Prepared For Their Courses)

G4: Yes, it was effective. That the principal was an accomplished person who evaluated the rights and wrongs without insulting the opposite party was effective in me being prepared for the lessons. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Had Positive Effect on Teachers Being Prepared For Their Courses)

G7: I didn't need this because I am already prepared for my lessons. We need to be prepared with conscience already. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Didn't Have a Positive Effect on Teachers Being Prepared For Their Courses)

G11: I don't think it made any difference. I think the supervisor is the students. If the students are hardworking, then they will force the teacher. I find it odd to be supervised by a supervisor or the principal. The reason is because we move away from our natural behaviors during supervisions. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Didn't Have a Positive Effect on Teachers Being Prepared For Their Courses)

G3: In my first year I made preparations after I heard that the principal was going to attend the lesson. But in time I found the preparation unnecessary. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Partly Affected the Teachers in Being Prepared For Their Courses)

G18: The principals conducting the supervisions throughout the school-year permanently will give more positive results concerning performance. (The School Principal Conducting Course Supervision Partly Affected the Teachers in Being Prepared For Their Courses)

The second question in the interview form aimed at determining whether or not the change in the supervision system had any effects in teachers preparing official documents and filling in the course notebook on time. 39 participants gave valid statements for this interview question. Analysis of participant opinions indicated that the change had positive contributions in preparing official documents and filling in the course notebook completely and on time. It was stated that processes and duties, which were forgotten or delayed due to the course hours or the teachers being inattentive or forgetting, became more orderly. Opinions that can be summarized like this were expressed by 19 participants and were

placed under the category stating that it had positive effects on preparing official documents and filling the course notebook on time. 20 participants stressed that preparing official documents is among the duties and responsibilities of teachers and that this change will have no effects on people who have a sense of responsibility. Participant opinions with this view were placed under the category stating that there are no effects on preparing official documents and filling the course notebook on time; outstanding opinions are given below:

G14: Yes, it is rather effective. We have no problems in filling in the notebooks anyway. But I sometimes want to fill it in later so that the lesson won't be interrupted but this causes me to forget it. (It Had Positive Effects on Preparing Official Documents and Filling in the Course Notebook on Time)

G21: Yes. Because the notebooks are checked regularly, we need to show that we are doing our own part. (It Had Positive Effects on Preparing Official Documents and Filling in the Course Notebook on Time)

G24: No, I was doing this regularly anyway, it continued the same way. (It Had No Effects in Preparing Official Documents and Filling in the Course Notebook on Time)

G27: I prepare my documents before. I have the sense that this is something that teachers should do. (It Had No Effects in Preparing Official Documents and Filling in the Course Notebook on Time)

With this respect, this study aimed at determining whether or not the change made in the supervision sub-system in the Turkish educational system led to any psychological changes in teachers. Thus, an interview question was asked to the teachers in order for them to compare the supervisions carried out by educational supervisors and school principals and state in which supervision they felt themselves more comfortable. The thematic view of the figure resulting from the analysis of this interview question is given below.

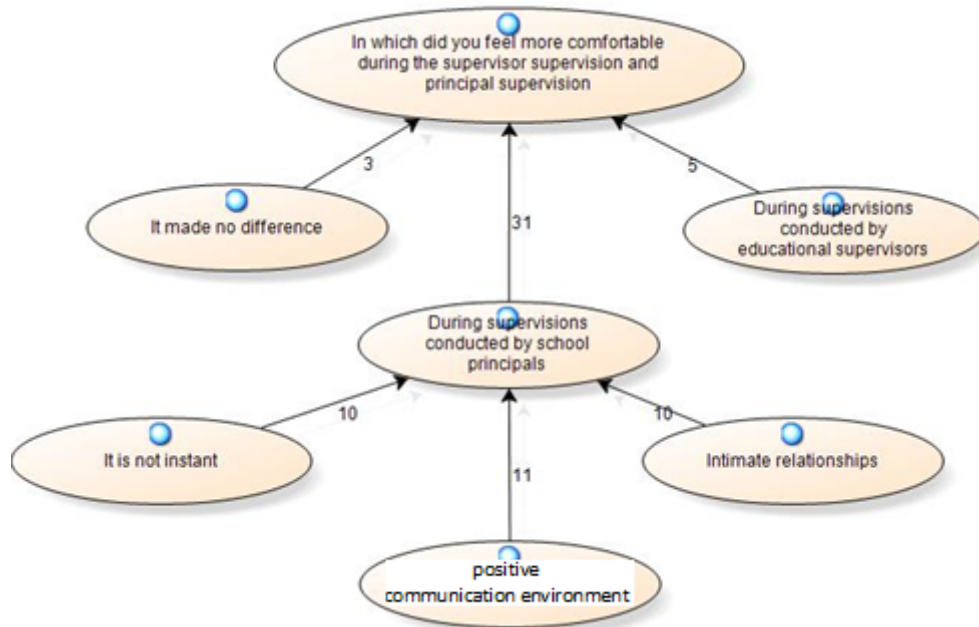


Figure 1. In which did you feel more comfortable during the supervisor supervision and principal supervision

It is evident in Figure 1 that only three participants stated that there was no comfort in course supervision based on change. Participant opinions indicate that this is due to their high self-confidence. Five participants stated that they feel more comfortable when course supervisions are conducted by educational supervisors. When participant opinions are considered, it is evident that the participants feel uncomfortable about being supervised by the principals during the academic year and that they consider the supervision carried out by educational supervisors to be more effective for their professional development. Along with these opinions, some participants stated that because educational supervisors conduct supervision only once or twice, they encounter the cold atmosphere of supervision less, thus, supervisions carried out by educational supervisors make them feel better. Participants who expressed these opinions emphasized the fact that they do not know the educational supervisors who come for supervision.

However, 31 different participant opinions indicate that participants feel more comfortable during supervisions conducted by school principals. Participant opinions in this direction were placed under the categories supervisions carried out by principals are not instant (n=10), there is a positive communication setting (n=11) and intimate relationships (n=10). The fact that supervisions conducted by school principals are not as short, or limited to once or twice, and that a process is followed rather than considering the image about the teacher during the supervision, enables teachers to feel more comfortable during supervisions by school principals. Participant opinions that can be summarized like this were placed under the category stating that supervisions made by principals are not instant. 11 participant opinions indicated that the participants felt tense during supervisions conducted by educational supervisors, but that school principals carried out the supervision politely and without judgement, and that they felt more comfortable during supervision by school principals due to the positive communication within schools. Participant opinions parallel with this were placed under the positive communication setting category. Similarly, 10 participants stated that they felt themselves better during the supervisions conducted by school principals due to the intimate relationships resulting from the positive communication atmosphere within schools. These opinions were placed under the intimate relationships category. Significant participant opinions and the categories they were placed under concerning the interview question on which supervision the teachers felt themselves more comfortable after comparing the supervisions carried out by educational supervisors and school principals.

G8: I don't discriminate them. Both of them made positive approaches. But there was a closeness and intimacy because I knew the school principal for a long while. (It made no difference)

G16: I am more comfortable during supervisor supervisions because they make evaluations based on necessary documents and professional education. I see them in regular periods. These make me feel comfortable. (I Feel More Comfortable When Course Supervisions Are Conducted By Educational Supervisors)

G18: I am more anxious during the principal's supervisions. (I Feel More Comfortable When Course Supervisions Are Conducted By Educational Supervisors)

G22: I feel more relaxed during the principal's supervisions. It makes me feel better because I know the principal and because the principal has more opportunities for supervision. The supervisor comes only once. It is important that the supervisor knows me

and that the classroom that is to be supervised is determined. This means that supervisors cannot fully observe us. (I Feel More Comfortable in Supervisions Conducted by School Principals Because They Are Not Instant)

G29: I was more relaxed during the principal's supervision. The reason for this is because there was no formal communication. I was more relaxed during the principal's supervision because he used constructive language rather than an imperative or judgmental language. (I Feel More Comfortable in Supervisions Conducted by School Principals Because There Is a Positive Communication Atmosphere)

G37: I was more relaxed during the principal's supervision. The principal is like our friend. That's why I'm relaxed and it's different when someone who you are unfamiliar with supervises you. (I Feel More Comfortable in Supervisions Conducted by School Principals Due To Intimate Relationships)

It was observed that all the opinions stated for the interview question concerning the objectivity of school principals during the course supervisions were accepted as valid and were placed under three categories by the researchers. Categories under which participant opinions were placed are given in Figure 2.

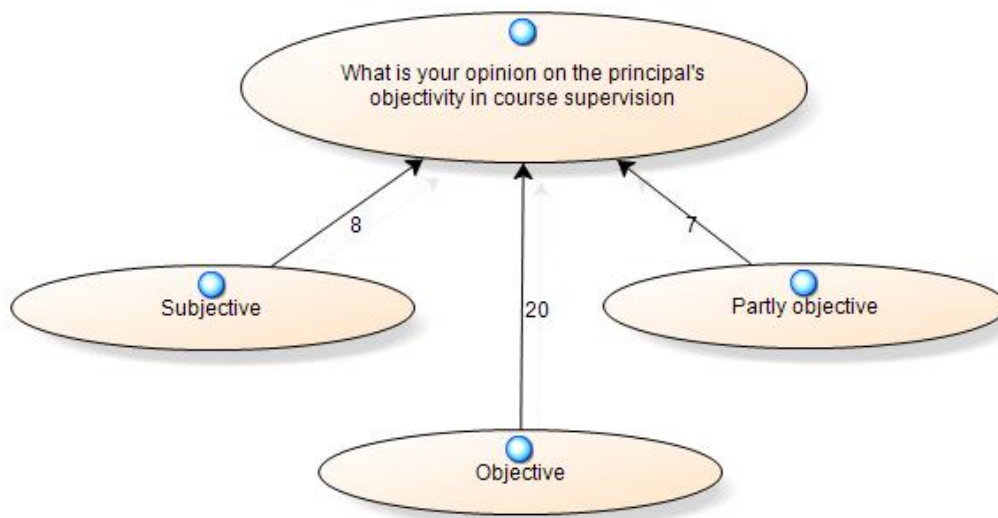


Figure 2. Participant opinions on the objectivity of school principals during course supervisions

Based on the importance of the objectivity of the person responsible for course supervision, the objectivity of the course supervisions carried out by school principals was questioned. Four participant opinions stated for this interview question were considered invalid by the researchers. Seven opinions among the valid opinions were placed under the *Partly Objective* category. These opinions can be summarized as; daily events occurring within the school, personality of the principal, losing his objectivity from time-to-time. Eight different participant opinions stressed that school principals were unable to or couldn't be objective due to the sense of belonging to a political view and to a union. Participant opinions that can be summarized like this were placed under the *Subjective* category. Twenty participants stated that school principals were objective during course supervisions. It was underlined that during course supervisions, school principals equally approached all teachers without discrimination and strived to offer solutions for the problems encountered

by remaining objective. In addition, it was stated that school principals were not competent in course supervisions. Significant participant opinions stated for the objectivity of school principals during course supervisions are given below with the category they were placed under.

G6: As in all institutions, there can be problems concerning objectivity in schools. The principal can favor those teachers who are close to him. This is the biggest disadvantage of principal supervisions. (Partly Objective)

G25: I believe that they can't be objective. They may be unjust towards teachers who have different opinions from them. The authority being assigned to them may lead the issue to a new direction. (Subjective)

G33: I only think that supervision conducted by the school principal is insufficient, a teacher from another branch should participate as well. (Objective)

Participant opinions concerning the school, social setting and the opportunities of the school related to course supervisions were examined. Only four participant opinions emphasized that this causes no effect on course supervision. The remaining 35 participant opinions underline that this had positive effects on course supervisions. Being familiar with the social environment of the school was considered as a crucial parameter in negative student behaviors, low academic achievement and explaining teacher performance. The school principal being aware of these is considered to be related to the events that teachers experience or can experience during the lesson and in their communication with the parents. Outstanding participant opinions are given below:

G38: The competences, vision, knowledge and skills of the person who conducted supervision are crucial in evaluation. But it doesn't matter who carries out the supervision. (Ineffective)

G11: Yes it has effects. Because school principals can make clear and specific comments on teacher performance when they are aware of the students' levels and the environmental atmosphere. It will be better for our course performance being evaluated this way. (Effects Positively)

G30: The biggest disadvantage of the old system was that the supervisor was unfamiliar with the environment. They would take instant decisions. But this disappeared with school principals. (Affects Positively)

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine teacher opinions on the new supervision system of course supervisions being carried out by school principals rather than by educational supervisors and the qualitative research design was used. Five interview questions prepared by the researcher were used as the data collection instrument. Necessary corrections were made to the interview questions based on expert opinions and before they took their final.

Study findings indicate that teachers began coming to lessons on time and well-prepared after the course supervisions started to be conducted by school principals. In addition, some participants stated that they didn't experience the negative events or negative communication settings which occurred with educational supervisors during the

supervisions carried out by school principals and underlined that this helped their internal motivations to increase. There are many studies which suggest that teacher motivations are affected negatively, they become stressful and feel under pressure during supervisions made by supervisors. For example, in their studies, Akcan and Polat (2015), Papadopoulou and Yirci (2013), Yilmaz, 2013; Ozdemir, Boydak-Ozan, and Akgun (2011), Colak, Altinkurt, and Yilmaz (2014), Sari and Altun (2015), Yorulmaz, Altinkurt, and Yilmaz (2015), Gunduz and Coskun (2011), and Aslanargun and Tarku (2014) found that during supervisions, supervisors try to find a fraud, they are not constructive and they lead to a decrease in teacher motivation by imposing stress on teachers during supervisions. Thus, it can be concluded that course supervisions conducted by teachers rather than educational supervisors have positive results concerning teacher motivation.

Study results indicate that the change in the supervision system didn't have much effect in teachers preparing official documents and filling in the course notebook on time. This shows that teachers have internalized their official responsibilities about their duties and generally performed them in a routine. One other argument that can be stated from this result is that school principals also examine the official documents that teachers prepare during their supervisions.

One of the crucial results of this study is that the majority of the participants feel more comfortable during supervisions conducted by school principals. Participants in the study group emphasized that they find it positive that supervisions conducted by principals are not instant, that there is a positive communication setting and that there are more intimate relationships. The fact that supervisions conducted by school principals are not short and limited to once or twice and that the process is followed rather than considering the image about the teacher during the supervision enabled the teachers to feel themselves more comfortable during the supervisions carried out by school principals. Findings were observed to be parallel with the findings of the study conducted by Ozdemir and Yirci (2015).

Teacher opinions on whether or not school principals, who are the primary agents responsible for teacher supervision, are objective during supervisions show the hesitation on this issue. While the majority of teachers state that the principals are objective (n=20), the number of teachers (n=15) stating that principals were partly objective or not objective is significant. Thus, opinions indicating that principals are not objective assert that; daily events that take part within the school, personality of the principal, political views or unions where one is connected to can prevent objectivity. Teachers who stated that school principals are objective during supervisions underlined that they treat everyone equally and that principals strive to resolve problems in a constructive manner. However, study results indicate that school principal's competences were insufficient during course supervisions. This problem is related to the training and appointment of school principals. In our current school principal training and appointment system, there are no obligations to receive training on supervision. According to Recepoglu and Kilinc (2014), having worked as a teacher for a certain period of time and having received higher education are considered as the primary conditions to becoming a school principal. School administrators were subject to a competitive examination so as to be trained within the service. However, these practices were not long-lasting.

Study results indicate that supervision conducted by both supervisors and principals is not fully perfect. However, when considered generally, teachers find the supervision carried

out by the principals to be more positive. The following suggestions can be made based on the study results:

- In order to conduct effective and objective supervision, which will help achieving organizational goals, the principals who will conduct supervisions should be selected carefully and be trained in course supervision. This can be achieved by appointing school administrators based on the merit principle and by giving in-service training.
- Due to the fact that supervisions conducted only by school principals will be insufficient, multi-data resources can be used in teacher supervision. Parent, colleague and student opinions can be taken into consideration for this.
- Ethical codes can be developed to enable school principals to carry out an objective and unbiased teacher supervision.
- A more detailed implementation framework can be established by the Ministry for school principals to conduct a standardized implementation in course and teacher supervision.

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