Article Critique entitled: “The Analysis of the Opinions of School Directors about Their Knowledge of the Curriculums and Their Support and Control in the Implementation”

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ABSTRACT

The present paper offers a critical review of the article published under the title of “The Analysis of the Opinions of School Directors about Their Knowledge of the Curriculums and Their Support and Control in the Implementation”. The reviewed article aimed at analyzing the opinions of school directors related to their levels of recognition, comprehension and explanation, along with their support and their supervisory duties in the process of the implementation of the curriculum. This study was conducted with a qualitative research approach. In this study, phenomenological research design was used since the subject of this study is to make sense of the experiences and the behaviors of school directors related to their comprehension of curriculum, their support in the application and their inspection task in the implementation of the curriculum. In this study, a semi structured interview form consisting of three basic questions was used as data collection tool along with the interview technique in which the probing of these questions are made. The research group is determined in terms of simple sampling method and consists of 28 secondary school directors. The data collected through interviews is analyzed through content analysis. Hence, the reviewer followed theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches to qualitative research sought to critically appraise the article. Accordingly, the article was written in line with qualitative research approach and it had some limitations that lessen its empirical power.
Introduction

In the education process, one of the most important burdens in fulfilling the duties expected from school itself is undertaken by school directors. Despite a great organization, well-developed curriculums and qualified teaching staff, in the absence of a modern school director, it will not be able to achieve expected benefits of educational activities (Robinson, 2008). Therefore, a well-trained in all aspects of school directors can carry on the educational duties with a success. In this process, a school director is charged with performing responsibilities such as; managing the other staff in the school (officers, teachers, servants, deputy principals, etc.) effectively, regulating the physical conditions of a school, developing good relationships with surroundings, following students’ improvement in every respect. Hence, school directors have a crucial role carrying out educational activities efficiently.

According to Robinson (2008), the basic duties, powers and responsibilities of the school directors are to carry out the objectives of the school. The primary task of a school director is to manage, evaluate and develop the objectives of the school properly. The fulfillment of this primary task is closely related to the school directors’ knowledge of the curriculum, their support in the implementation of the curriculum and their role in the evaluation and controlling of the curriculum. The school directors’ comprehension of the curriculum, the support they provide the teachers in the implementation of the curriculum, their determination in the use of school facilities in the successful implementation of the curriculum, and their tasks related to the evaluation and controlling of teaching process may provide important contributions to the improvement of teaching activities. Moreover, this situation will also contribute to the definitions which support the idea that curriculum development process is perpetual and can be performed through application.

As Şişman and Turan (2004) state, the traditional roles and responsibilities of the contemporary of school directors have transformed into a new view consisting of different titles such as leadership, communication, group processes, curriculum development, teaching-learning processes, performance evaluation, etc. they stated that the school director should be the person who starts the learning process and who, through enhancing teachers’ abilities, creativities and devotion, supports teachers in the achievement of the goals of the school. Herrington (2005) says that such a situation will suppress school directors; however, contemporary education directors are responsible for student success. School directors promote the improvement of the sense of justice by supporting teachers, providing source materials and promoting and controlling the use of these materials for the intended purpose (Harris, 2004).

When some studies on the duties, roles and responsibilities of the school directors for a modern school are analyzed, it is stated that the roles of school directors, in general, are: as a teaching leader, to support teaching activities; to create a positive learning environment; to coordinate curriculum and activities; to create an effective school culture; to contribute to teachers’ career development; to manage the curriculum; to participate in teamwork; to bear new responsibilities caused by the increasing pressure due to student success (Celikten, 2006). In performing these critical duties and in improving the quality of instruction, the school director must be a teaching leader in such duties as revising continually the applications in the school, giving help and support in the applications, and controlling the educational processes. According to Çubukçu and Girmen (2006), in performing these duties and improving the quality of instruction, school
directors must check up on teachers' performances continually.

Huseyin (2016), the author of currently critiquing article, was made a good attempt in analyzing the opinions of school directors related to their levels of recognition, comprehension and explanation, along with their support and their supervisory duties in the process of the implementation of the curriculum. He deduced that the school directors have to provide support in supplying teaching tools, in planning teaching and content organization, in improving the teaching environment, in conducting meetings with the teachers, in encouraging, supporting and guiding them, in cooperating with the private sector, in following the novelities, in conduction in-service training and vocational seminars, in evaluation, in the determination of strategy, method and technique, in communication and in collaborating with the teachers. In relation to the school directors’ task of controlling, he also argued that they should give priority to fulfill their controlling tasks like inspecting the teachers, inspecting the appropriateness of teaching environment and tools, inspecting teaching plans, inspecting the appropriateness and achievement level of objectives, inspecting student satisfaction and inspecting the teaching environment.

The article being critiqued in this document focused on the analysis of the opinions of school directors about their knowledge of the curriculums and their support and control in the implementation. Universal Journal of Educational Research on volume 4, number 11, 2016. Therefore, the reviewer tried to see the problem and its conceptualization, the research approach, sample techniques, data sources and tools, data analysis and major findings, ethical considerations, and forwards concluding remarks.

Problem Discussion and Conceptualization

The article published under the title of “the analysis of the opinions of school directors about their knowledge of the curriculums and their support and control in the implementation” is clear and concisely stated as a qualitative research title. The main purpose of the study was determining the school directors’ opinions related to educational curriculum. In order to achieve this goal, different attitudes and behaviors of school directors such as their recognition, comprehension and explanation of the curriculum of the courses their schools provide, their evaluation, guidance and support in the applications of the curriculum, and their control of the suitability of the teaching activities were analyzed. In this sense the opinions and behaviors of school teachers related to recognition, comprehension and support and controlling of curriculum applications has great role in increasing school success, and it is hoped that this study contributed to the literature on this subject and to the increment of school success. In addition, through this study, the levels of school directors’ knowledge on the curriculum, the support they provided for the application of curriculum and their inspection activities were determined.

In the scope of this study, the analysis of the opinions of the school directors related to their recognition, comprehension and explanation levels of the curriculum, their support in the application of curriculum, and their inspection of the implementation of the curriculum were performed in the context of the answers given to the following questions:

1. What do you know about recognition, comprehension and explanation of the educational curriculum?
2. What kind of support do you provide in the application of curriculum? Specify the support you have provided and the reasons why you have provided such support.
3. While applying the curriculum, what have you done related to your inspection duty?
Write down with the reasons.

In general, the researcher clearly explained what is studied, who found what? What is missing? And what is left for him or the gap he wanted to fill on the problem identified. Moreover, the researcher convinced the readers about the decisiveness of the problem studied and the triggering gap in existing knowledge of the problem and supporting empirical evidences. In addition, the study has overtly written research question(s) as formulating a clear research question is absolutely indispensable.

**The Research Approach**

This study was conducted with a qualitative research approach. This approach offers a very special opportunity to focus on a subject or situation. In this context, this study was designed in accordance with the qualitative research design. The analysis of the opinions of school directors related to the curriculum to increase the quality of instruction was the main goal of this study. In this study, phenomenological research design, which is a qualitative research design, was applied. The phenomenological research design is used in cases which are well known but a deep comprehension cannot be attained. The aim here is to define the individuals’ experiences related to facts and events and the meanings they load them. Therefore, in this study, phenomenological research design was used since the subject of this study is to make sense of the experiences and the behaviors of school directors related to their comprehension of curriculum, their support in the application and their inspection task in the implementation of the curriculum. The study didn’t use multiple qualitative methods of study or data collection rather the study used only one qualitative method of study and data collection: phenomenological research design and only a semi structured interview respectively. Therefore, the study failed to integrate aspects of multiple methods of qualitative study.

**Sample Techniques, Data Sources and Tools**

This study, in the 2014-2015 academic years was carried by participation of school directors who are directing secondary schools such as; science high schools, social science high schools, Anatolian high schools and vocational high schools. While determining the school directors, simple sampling method is used and the study is carried out through simple negotiations with the school directors of the secondary school in the city center of Isparta. After 28 of the secondary school directors accepting the meeting request, the study group is composed by those school directors. Firstly, an appointment with each school director is requested. Upon the approval of each school director, an interview was made at the specified hour, and the data were recorded. Personal characteristics of the interviewed school directors are as follows: 5 of the 28 interviewed school director were women and 23 of them were men. 22 of them have a Bachelor’s Degree and 6 of them have a Master’s Degree. As for their directorship experience, 6 of them have 1-5 years of directorship experience, 3 of them 6-10 years, 12 of them 11-15 years, 3 of them 16-20 years and 6 of them 21 years and over. 15 of the interviewed school directors work in Vocational High Schools, 9 of them work in Anatolian High Schools, and the remaining 4 school director work in Science High School, Social Sciences High School, Sports High School and Fine Arts High School. To keep secret those school directors’ identity, codes between M1-M28 are used.

Concerning tools of data collection, the researcher used only a single data collection tool that is a semi structured interview. Therefore, instruments of data collection and the research design used to go hand in hand in this regard. However the study failed to integrate aspects of multiple methods of data collection such as observation, documentary review and others.
In researches, “validity” is related to the accuracy and “reliability” is related to replicability of the scientific findings. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the study, the researcher was attempted consult experts in order to provide the reliability and validity in this study. In this regard, firstly, the opinions of the experts have been made use of in the preparation of the interview form, and discussions with the experts have been made whether the questions in the interview form will collect data that will serve the purpose of this research. Then, in the meetings organized for the confirmation of the data, the researcher had informed the experts about the process orally, and presenting the collected data and the results of the study to the experts, the researcher had evaluated the validity of his own approach and way of thinking together with the experts and reached a consensus. The consistency of the data was evaluated in terms of (consensus and dissidence), and calculated using the formula (Consensus/Consensus+Dissidence) x100). According to the calculations, the percentage of minimum consensus was 80% and the maximum was 100%.

In spite of the above mentioned strengths, the reviewer felt that the study has some limitations. As initial, the researcher said nothing about his role. In qualitative research the interpretation of the findings cannot be separated from the researcher’s own background, history, contexts and prior understanding. Reflexivity is the Process of critically reflecting on the knowledge we produce and our role in producing this knowledge (Creswell, 2013). It can be of Functional reflexivity – critical attention to the way our research tools/methods may have influenced research and Personal reflexivity – making researcher visible as a part of research process. The researcher had functional reflexivity as the research tool/method applied in this study (phenomenological research design and a semi structured interview) influenced research but the researcher lucked Personal reflexivity because he didn’t make himself visible as a part of research process rather the researcher had only the role of an interviewer. Qualitative research is interpretive research, thus, inquirer explicitly identifies reflexively his bias, values, personal background, such as gender, culture and socioeconomic status that may shape his interpretations formed during the study. However, he did not indicate his reflexive bias to the audience.

**Data Analysis and Major Findings**

The researcher presented the data (i.e. tables, quotes, maps, data instruments) in the very smart and clear manner. As you can see the maps and quotes (on pages 2660, 2662, 2663) of the article, the researcher presented the data effectively. In this study, for analyzing of data, four main phrases were handled. Those phases were (1) Coding data (2) Determining themes (3) Regulation of codes and themes and (4) Identification and interpretation of findings. In the first phase, the interview forms recorded during the interview was analyzed one by one in terms of the questions asked to the participants. Answers given to each question, the data that constitutes a meaningful integrity in itself and the meaning derived from the data were coded first. The coded data were converted to the code list, by this way the code list had fulfilled the key element for the examination and organization of the data. In the second phase, based on the codes (concepts) achieved, themes were created according to the similarities of the codes. While themes are created, codes were gathered first, and then themes are created the common aspects of the codes into consideration. In the third phase, the data were arranged according to the resulting codes and themes. The first hand data were presented to the reader in such a way that the reader may understand, identify and explain the data he reads. In the last phase, findings were explained, cause-effect relations were established, some results were
derived from these relations, and some significant explanations were made. To help to ensure the validity and the security of the analysis, research data were examined in depth by different researchers, obtained categories are compared and agreed categories were recognized as research themes. Moreover, due to direct quotations are considered effective in reflecting the views of the individuals in qualitative assessments, some data obtained in qualitative assessment has been transmitted without any interpretations. In analyzing and modeling research data, “QSR NVivo10” software was used. Hence, based on the analysis conducted, interpretations of data were also undertaken. Finally, in line with the findings obtained, conclusions were drawn, and reflections were forwarded accordingly. Therefore, the reviewer admired the article regarding the way the data were analyzed.

According to the obtained results related to the opinions of school directors in terms of their levels of recognition, comprehension and explanation of curriculum, the study concluded that the school directors are familiar with ‘objective’ (%89), with ‘content’ (54%), with ‘learning situations’ (57%) and with ‘evaluation’ (75%). From the findings related to the support the school directors provided in the implementation of the curriculums, it can be deduced that the school directors have provided support in supplying teaching tools, in planning teaching and content organization, in improving the teaching environment, in conducting meetings with the teachers, in encouraging, supporting and guiding them, in cooperating with the private sector, in following the novelties, in conduction in-service training and vocational seminars, in evaluation, in the determination of strategy, method and technique, in communication and in collaborating with the teachers.

When the findings related to the school directors’ task of controlling, it is clear that they give priority to fulfill their controlling tasks like inspecting the teachers, inspecting the appropriateness of teaching environment and tools, inspecting teaching plans, inspecting the appropriateness and achievement level of objectives, inspecting student satisfaction and inspecting the teaching environment.

Finally, in the light of the findings obtained and the conclusions made, the researcher forwarded appropriate suggestions in order to contribute to the practice and literature on this subject.

**Ethical considerations**

In addition to conceptualizing the writing process for a proposal, researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies (Hesse-Biber & Leavey, 2006). Research does involve collecting data from people, about people (Punch, 2005). As mentioned earlier, writing about these issues is required in making an argument for a study as well as being an important topic in the format for proposals. Researchers need to protect their research participants: develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions: and cope with new, challenging problems (Isreal & Hay, 2006). Ethical questions are apparent today in such issues as personal disclosure, authenticity and credibility of the research report, the role of researchers in cross-cultural contexts, and issues of personal privacy through forms of Internet data collection (Isreal & Hay, 2006). In the literature, ethical issues arise in discussions about codes of professional conduct for researchers and in commentaries about ethical dilemmas and their potential solutions (Punch, 2005).

Based on the above explanations, the researcher of this study maintained some important aspects of ethical issues but not all ethical considerations. In writing an introduction to a study, the researcher identified a significant problem or issue to study and presents a rationale for its importance. During the
identification of the research problem, the researcher identified a problem that will benefit individuals being studied, one that will be meaningful for others besides the researcher (Punch, 2005) and conveyed the purpose of the study that will be described to the participants. While determining the school directors, simple sampling method is used and the study is carried out through simple negotiations with the school directors of the secondary school in the city center of Isparta. After 28 of the secondary school directors accepting the meeting request, the study group is composed by those school directors. Firstly, an appointment with each school director is requested. Upon the approval of each school director, an interview was made at the specified hour, and the data were recorded.

In short, the researcher: identified how the participants were selected, the purpose of the research, the benefits for and guarantee of confidentiality to the participant but didn’t identify the sponsoring institution, the levels and type of participant involvement, didn’t notify of risks to the participant, didn’t assure that the participant can withdraw at any time and didn’t provide names of persons to contact if questions arise.

Concluding Remarks

The main purpose of the study was determining the school directors’ opinions related to educational curriculum. In order to achieve this goal, different attitudes and behaviors of school directors such as their recognition, comprehension and explanation of the curriculum of the courses their schools provide, their evaluation, guidance and support in the applications of the curriculum, and their control of the suitability of the teaching activities were analyzed. In this sense the opinions and behaviors of school teachers related to recognition, comprehension and support and controlling of curriculum applications has great role in increasing school success, and it is hoped that this study contributed to the literature on this subject and to the increment of school success. In addition, through this study, the levels of school directors’ knowledge on the curriculum, the support they provided for the application of curriculum and their inspection activities were determined. This study was important in that the study analyzed the opinions of school directors related to their levels of recognition, comprehension and explanation, along with their support and their supervisory duties in the process of the implementation of the curriculum. It employed a qualitative research design and simple sampling techniques. The data collection procedure was not bad and follows ethical considerations. The data analysis was also more than acceptable and the conclusions were drawn in line with the data presented. Finally, in the light of the findings obtained and the conclusions made, the researcher forwarded appropriate suggestions in order to contribute to the practice and literature on this subject.

In spite of the above mentioned strengths, the study has drawbacks. As initial, the researcher said nothing about his role. In relation to this, the researcher did not address the elements of reflexivity especially the researcher lacked personal reflexivity because he didn’t make himself visible as a part of research process. Besides, the researcher used only a single data collection tool that is a semi structured interview and due to this the study failed to integrate aspects of multiple methods of data collection such as observation, documentary review and others and this in turn made the researcher not to substantiate its findings and capture the diverse respondents’ views. In general, the researcher had no scrutinized the limitations and implications of the study. Therefore, these shortcomings significantly limit the empirical power of the article.

References


