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The evaluation of the competency perception of inspectors in using new instructional technology

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out the evaluation of inspectors in regards to their competency perceptions towards the use of new instructional technologies. This is a qualitative model research. The target population of this study consisted of 25 inspectors serving within the borders of TRNC in 2011. Data was collected by an "interview form" developed by the researcher. The interview form consisted of 6 items. Content analyze, frequency (f) and percentage (%) techniques were used to analyze the data. This research pointed out that: "concerns on falling behind the teacher", "training needs", "decreasing training support within the years" and "non existing policy on IT support" are critical factors affecting an inspector's competency perceptions in using new instructional technologies.

Keywords: New Instructional Technologies; Inspectors; Competency Perception

1. Introduction

The dimensions of selecting the appropriate teaching techniques, implementation and evaluation are crucial in the supervision work of inspectors for teachers. There are a number of research's which have been conducted in this area (Flick, L., & Bell, R. 2000; Renklier, 2005; Vezne, 2006; Kaloç, 2006). However, it has been explored in some parts of this work that inspectors do not support the teachers enough in selecting and implementing new teaching techniques and methods (Cerit, 1996). Therefore, it may be valid to state that, while supervising the teachers to become more successful in their schools, the inspectors, might have some deficiencies themselves or might face some problems in this process. In this sense, besides the training activities for teachers, training activities for inspectors (which has been intended to overcome some deficiencies) has also been carried out as well and needs to be continued. In addition to this, it has been stated that inspectors do receive in-service trainings in order to be more successful in achieving the role of a guide and trainer, but in some cases they cannot benefit enough from them. In his work, Aydın (1996) stated that inspectors do not benefit enough from the in-service trainings and they are not happy with the results of these trainings.

A number of research about increasing teachers performances by heading them more towards to new instructional technologies has been carried out, targeting more quality in schooling and making use of information technologies in the world and in Turkey (Giannakaki, 2005; Gerono, 2007; Hall & Noyes, 2009; Martin, 2010) (Ordu, 2007;

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Akman & Mugan, 2010). But very few researches are available questioning the connections between the inspectors' work and their proficiency in technology use. This draws our attention to the inspector's competency perceptions in using new teaching-learning technologies and their reasoning.

What are the types of the technological tools that inspectors use most? On which level they are able to control these tools? These are some of the questions which have been investigated in most part of these researches found in the literature (Nansaarng, Kaewkuekool & Siripattanakunkajorn, 2009; Kaloç, 2006; Korkmaz, 2007; Kunduz, 2007; Uygur, 2006). Quantitative research has mostly been used in order to answer the questions in these researches. Especially, the proficiency of the inspectors towards the inspection of information technology classes (which has started to become more popular these days) have started to be investigated by the researchers and by doing this some researchers have reached the conclusion which is relying on the fact that the inspectors do not have enough knowledge on information technology, and because of this, they cannot perform well enough in terms of the guidance in using the technology and guidance for the information technology classes (Gürer, 2005; Boz, 2006; Döngel, 2006).

Some researchers claim that the inspectors inefficiency in using technology is generally caused by bad working conditions. Tanrıverdi (2008) has come up with such a conclusion after his research. According to his research, he has claimed that because of the bad working conditions (such as too much working hours and work dissatisfaction); the inspectors do not perform well enough. On the other hand, there are some other researchers who have tried to find out if the inspectors who are more successful in using technology have anything in common (Boz, 2006). It has been found from one of the recent studies that the inspectors who have taken educational technology lessons, those young, those with higher education levels, and those who work specifically in science field have a higher level of knowledge in using technology then thouse who do not carry these group characteristics (Yılmaz, 2010). Yılmaz, also points out that this group with higher technological skills also has less anxiety level in using computers and new IT tools. However, although there are a number of researches conducted in order to examine in which extent and on which success level do teachers use new instructional technology (Erdoğan, 2007; Ordu, 2007; İşman, 2002; Russell, 2003; Sugar, 2004; Bebel, 2004); the studies that questions the existence and quality of using new instructional technology between the inspector and the teacher could not been reached. What do inspectors think about their use of new instructional technology in their work? What do they think about its effects on their performance? How do they explain the reasons of their evaluations? The target of this research is to contribute some answers to this area.

The main aim of this research is to identify the proficiency perception of educational inspectors (in TRNC) in use of new instructional technology. By doing this, we can make suggestions and give our opinions to the Ministry about "how" they can improve their inspectors proficiency in using new instructional technologies. In order to reach this aim, answers for the questions below have been searched:

1. What are the competency perceptions of the inspectors in acknowledging and using new instructional technology?
2. What are the "needs" of the inspectors in recognizing and using the new instructional technology?
3. What impact do the inspectors think their proficiency perceptions in using new instructional technology has on their professional performances?
4. Do the inspectors think that they face obstacles in front of their proficiency of using new instructional technology? If so, what are these obstacles?
5. Comparing with their previous jobs (teachers or school masters) what impact do the inspectors think their job has on their sufficiency perceptions in using new instructional technology?
6. How do the inspectors asses the policy of the Ministry in using the new instructional technologies?
7. What are the necessary in-service trainings and professional progress requirements that the inspectors think they need to have in order to develop sufficiency in using new instructional technology?

2. Method

A browsing model has been used in this research, in order to be able to make general judgments about the universe of inspectors & head inspectors with an aim of evaluating their use and the adequacy of new instructional technology.

In order to make the inspectors reflect their opinions about their attitude on new instructional technology use in a warm atmosphere, the face to face conversation technique is the one which has been used from the data collection techniques.

2.1 Participants

The research consist of the 25 education inspectors & head inspectors who constitutes the whole inspector staff in National Board of Educational Inspection, Appraisal and Counseling, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. %60 (f:15) of the participants are female and %40 (f:10) of them are males. %4 of the participant's ages ranges between 37-41, while %12 of them are between 42-45 and % 84 over 46. %92 of the participants do have 3 or 4 years seniority in their jobs. On the other hand, %1 of the participants does have 14 and %1 have 1 year seniority in their jobs. The %12 (f:3) of the universe has been composed of the head inspectors and %88 (f:22) of the universe has been composed of the inspectors.

2.2 Information Collection Tools and Implementation

In this research, the face to face conversation technique has been used in order to reach the aims. Because of this, the interview form serving to reach the aim of the research has been arranged by benefiting from the previous information gathered from literature and expert views. In this manner, the proficiency perceptions of the inspectors on using new instructional technology has been gathered via an interview. The related literature about the "Interviews" has been examined and attention has been paid to the facts that needs be avoided or being careful in the scientific interviews. In addition to this, much attention was exercised to create a comfortable atmosphere for the participants. The participants were asked for permission for a voice recording before the interview. There was only one inspector who did not permit a voice recording. Both of the data collection techniques (voice recording and note taking) have been used for the remaining inspectors (%96 (f:24)) in the research universe. The interview duration estimates have been informed as 25-30 minutes before the start and it has implemented as it has been planned. The researcher has recorded everything in the face to face interviews which have been materialized by the half constituted interview questions (which have been developed by the researcher).

The interviews with the inspectors started on 1st March 2011, and carried on through till March, the data collection work was ultimately completed on 1 April 2011. Accordingly, there is a crucial need to mention that the interviews (which started on 1st March 2011) have been organized in such a way in order not create an obstacle for the routine work of the inspectors. The interviews, were completed successfully with the help of three head inspectors and 22 inspectors who all works in the National Board of Educational Inspection, Appraisal and Counseling (MEDDYK). The necessary permission was obtained from the Ministry of National Education Youth and Sports before the start of the research.

2.3 Data Analysis

The face to face conversation data which have been obtained from the interview, has been analyzed with content analysis. In addition to this, the existing literature has been scanned and interpreted. In resolving the face to face conversation techniques, the analysis techniques of periodicity (f) and percentage (%) has been used, besides the content analysis.

3. Results

3.1. The knowledge of inspectors in recognizing the new instructional technology

In the research, % 56 (f:14) of the inspectors mentioned that they believe their knowledge on new instructional technology is "average or above average". On the other hand, %16 (f: 4) of the inspectors, do believe that their knowledge about the new instructional technology is "unsatisfactory". %16 (f: 4) of the inspectors believe that their knowledge is "below the medium level" but they consider this level "sufficient". It may be valid to think that the reason why the inspectors believe that their knowledge of new instructional technology is sufficient for them

is because of the failure of the Ministry in clarifying the level requirements for new instructional technology knowledge which is aimed and expected from the inspectors. Little demand and expectation from the schools and teachers may be another cause of this perception of inspectors.

3.2. The New Instructional Technology Use of the Inspectors

%56 (f: 13) of the inspectors believe that they need to improve their qualifications about new instructional technology. The data driven from the research has showed that %44 (f: 11) of the inspectors think that they have a good sense of using new instructional technology. %44 (f: 11) of the inspectors do perceive their situation on using new instructional technology as a "good" situation. On the other hand, %55 of the inspectors do believe that their knowledge level in using new instructional technology is average or below average. Accordingly, these perceptions can be regarded as a sign of deficiency and educational need in this area.

3.3. The needs of the inspectors in recognizing new instructional technology

The data driven from the research has stated that %88 (f: 22) of the inspectors need more information about new instructional technology. In this group, %39 of the inspectors also have shown that they are conscious about the persistence of this need. On the other hand, the data driven from this question has indicated that %28 (f: 7) of the inspectors need more information than they have about recognizing the knowledge of new instructional technology and they also would like to see themselves in front of the teachers in terms of using, recognizing and acknowledging new instructional technology. This data may be regarded as a crucial information for this research.

3.4. The needs of inspectors in using new instructional technology

While %68 (f:17) of the inspectors has mentioned that knowledge on new instructional technology is not sufficient on its own and add "the need to use it" as a vital issue; %24 (f:6) of the inspectors also insisted on the fact that they want to see themselves far ahead from the teachers in terms of using and implementing new instructional technology. This data has indicated the fact that %24 of the inspectors would like to see themselves more adequate than the teachers in terms of recognizing and implementing new instructional technology at the least. Concerns regarding being capable or insufficient to guide teachers on how to use technology effectively in the class may be the underlying reasoning.

3.5 The impact of inspector's adequacy in using new instructional technology on their general performances

The %80 (f: 20) of the inspectors mentioned that they believe that using new instructional technology does affect their professional performances positively and will continue to affect their performances positively in the future. However, %12 (f: 13) of the inspectors have demonstrated that their knowledge and ability in using the new instructional technology does not affect their professional performances that much. On the other hand %4 (f: 1) of the inspectors think that because they use the new instructional technology too much, it affects their professional performance negatively. In addition to this, %4 (f: 1) of the inspectors consider that they are not sufficient enough in using new instructional technology and this affects their professional performances negatively. Generally speaking, these results show that most of the inspectors believe that they use new instructional technologies during their professional work and that produces positive results.

3.6. The possible obstacles in front of the inspectors to improve their proficiency in using new instructional technology

The %40 (f: 10) of the inspectors have indicated that the main obstacle in front of the progress in using new instructional technology is the Ministry itself. According to the inspectors, the Ministry does not provide sufficient support and resources continuously for them in order to use the new instructional technology better. The second biggest barrier perception is the lack of time because of the intensity of their work (%32 (f: 8). According to this, it would be valid to state that while inspectors lean towards the new possibilities which will be provided by the

Ministry on this issue, they also believe that they do not have enough time for this training possibilities. This needs to be regarded as an interesting situation. It may be said that, in order to construct successful in-service trainings for successful new instructional technology use, preventions should be taken for not increasing the work-load of the inspectors in parallel.

3.7. The impact of inspector job and its conditions on using new instructional technologies

While %76 (f: 19) of the inspectors (previously teachers or school masters) believe that the new conditions of being an inspector helped them improve their sufficiency in getting better with using new instructional technology; %20 (f: 5) of the inspectors think just the opposite. Thus it may be beneficial to research this further in order to find out the reasons underlying this phenomenon.

3.8. The Evaluation of trainings done so far to help inspectors improve their New Instructional Technology Use.

%72 (f: 18) of the inspectors stated that the work of the Ministry in helping the inspectors to improve their proficiency in using the new instructional technology is inadequate. %68 (f:17) of the inspectors do think that there is a major "fall down" in the work of the Ministry on this issue if it is compared with previous years. %28 (f: 7) of the inspectors have preferred not to comment on this subject. As a consequence of this, it may be valid to state that the first evaluation is strongly shared by the whole inspector universe. And because of this, it would be logical to say that this needs to be regarded as a sign of deficiency in this area and it is time to take an action on this issue as soon as possible.

3.9. The Suggestions of Inspectors on Improving Their Proficiency in Using the New Instructional Technology

%36 (f: 9) of the inspector advises the "non-stopped continuity" of the work done by the Ministry for inspectors on improving new instructional technology proficiency. On the other hand, %28 (f: 7) of the inspectors believe that before starting that work, "participant need analysis" has to become a routine process. In addition to this %24 (f: 6) of the inspectors have insisted on the fact that new instructional technology courses has to become "compulsory". After all of these suggestions, %12 (f: 3) of the inspectors recommends the use of new instructional technology intensely and that it should be embedded in most of their in-service trainings. By these proposals, inspectors indicate the importance of the measures that needs to be taken in a long, middle or short term, about this issue.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, the research has indicated that the factors which affects the proficiency perception of the inspectors in using new instructional technology are: the unsatisfied education needs (%72 (f: 18), lack of the Ministry's support to inspectors in improving their competency in using new instructional technology through the years (%72 (f: 18)) and the lack of policy-strategy on technological support (%36 (f: 6)). In addition to these perceptions, the inspectors have an anxiety that if the conditions are uninterrupted they will be a lower level than the teachers regarding their proficiency in using new instructional technology (%24 (f:6)). There are a number of evaluations and findings in the literature (Aydın, 1996; Boz, 2006) that shows that inspectors have unsatisfied educational needs and these needs has to be eliminated similarly. The findings of a study which has been conducted in Turkey by Gürer (2005) in a similar manner shows that inspectors did not get the support from the Ministry in order to improve their qualification in using technology. Uzunboylu (2008), has also made important evaluations which emphasizes the fact that in TRNC, there is a need in policy building and strategy on technological support for helping the stakeholders (teachers-inspectors-managers and schools in general) in effectively using technology for education.

Considering the solutions and suggestions driven from the inspector's evaluations and proposals, it would be valid to think that the policy of Ministry needs to become clearer on this issue. The lack of legal regulations (which concretes the duty and responsibilities of people in using technology) needs to be resolved. An in-service training policy (compulsory, uninterrupted and based on the level groups) needs to be organized and the consequences of these trainings should be inspected. On the other hand, there may be a need to look closer to the reasons why the

%20 (f: 5) of the inspectors believed that their job conditions had a "bad impact" on their competency perceptions in using new instructional technology. A research conducted in that area in the future in order to find out the reasons underlying and reaching to some conclusions would probably have a positive contribution on the improvement of the inspector's productivity.

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