The Metaphoric Perceptions of Primary School Teachers on the Concept of Inspection

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of primary school teachers on the concept of inspection with the help of metaphors. The data were obtained from randomly selected students of 20 primary schools in the center of Gaziantep. 418 questionnaires were evaluated. The measurement instrument consisted of 31 metaphors and one open-ended question, which reads like "the inspector is like… because…" Statistical mean and dispersion, percentage, and frequency were studied. As a result of the study, the metaphors related to how inspectors were perceived and the answers to the items of the questionnaire were commented. 123 metaphors were developed. The developed metaphors mainly consist of negative metaphors. In the study, 76 negative, 20 both positive and negative, and 8 metaphors indicating that there is no need for the inspectors were determined. Only 12 metaphors that had positive meanings were found. Anything was stated for seven metaphors or they were used with similar meanings.

Key Words

Inspector, Metaphor, Inspector Metaphors.

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The inspection makes it possible to understand whether the educational activities are consistent with the aims of the institutions or not (Özmen, & Batmaz, 2006). In Turkish educational system, the inspection is applied by the units of the Ministry of National Education. Primary school inspection institute is one of these units. Primary school inspectors have been conducting inspection and evaluation duties for a long time (Töremen & Hozatlı, 2006). They have a big role both in creating a learning culture and making the organizational learning processes easier (Ünal, & Gürsel, 2007). The main expected role of the inspectors is guiding the teachers to make learning-teaching activities much more effective (Döş, 2005). Bennett (2006) states that there is a close relationship between inspectors and teachers, which consists of a required respect, communication, cooperation and understanding (Yılmaz, 2007). This relationship is perceived differently by teachers and is described with different metaphors.

Metaphors

The concept of a metaphor as a means of mental development was used for the first time in 1980 by Lakoff and Johnson's "Metaphors We Live By" studies. Their idea was known as "the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor" (Beşkardeş, 2007). Even though metaphors were only used in literature and linguistics, after the 1980s they became the center of interdisciplinary studies especially with the effect of "contemporary metaphor theory" (Alpaslan, 2007).

A metaphor as a term is used as transferring the equivalent of something or just transferring. In most dictionaries, a metaphor is described as comparing two things (Dur, 2006). In the dictionary of Turkish Language Institution, the description of the metaphor is given as follows: Using a word with different meanings than its real meaning or using the word with not its accepted meaning but with another meaning (TDK, 2008).

Metaphors help us notice the inside of something and they also make us misinterpret the things. Metaphors have both strong and weak points. They do not only lead us to realize something but also lead us not to realize. As a result, there cannot be one metaphor suitable for every situation. Different metaphors have power of making one situation clear and show us different characteristics can be together (Morgan, 1998). Me-

taphors are one of the strongest instruments, which construct our thoughts, guide them, and control as well (Saban, 2004). So, they can be regarded as one of the concepts forming our perceptions on a specific concept. Metaphors may be abstract and concrete as well as they can be both positive and negative. They help us understand complex issues easily as an information collecting and questioning instrument.

In the philosophy, metaphors are used to make the statement better and make the difficult subjects easier to understand (Aydın, 2006; Camp, 2006; Mojtabai, 2000; Randall, Jennifer, & Jennifer, 2005; Tamimi, 2005). According to Yılmaz (2007), the metaphor with its philosophical meaning is presented as an instrument which simplifies a difficult concept and presents it in a concrete way.

Metaphors can be seen as accepted communication tools (Hogler, Gross, Hartman, & Cunliffe, 2008; Steger, 2007). They connect the experience and imagination together. They lead our comments and perceptions on reality and help us state our imagination and aims clearly (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christenses, & Phillips, 2008; Lopez, 2007). Metaphors may express and describe the concepts not only in a clear way but also in a detailed way (Sten, 2002). The meaning of the metaphor in conceptual field is having a relation between the field of concepts, field of knowledge, and the words (Heywood, Elena, & Mick, 2002).

People need to use comparisons in order to pass through different subjects because of the limited vocabulary they have. Metaphors can help in creating images in the categories, rebuilding them, and also help to build up what the education includes (Çelikten, 2006; Levine, 2005). Metaphors are sometimes very powerful communication tools when words are not enough or the meaning is needed to be supported. In this context, metaphors make it possible for the minds to move from one comprehension style to another and make individuals see one action as a different action (Clarken, 1997; Girmen, 2007; Saban, Koçbeker, & Saban, 2006). Metaphors assist to reveal how concepts which are wanted to be analyzed (Cerit, 2008; Rızvanoğlu, 2007). Metaphors may be concrete or abstract as well as positive or negative. As a tool of getting information and examining, they can help the complex subjects be understood easily (Semerci, 2007).

Administration and Metaphors

It is seen that people develop metaphors as a descriptive, analytical, and sensitive tools in comprehending the school. Besides, they use metaphors in order to understand and examine the current situation (Balcı, 2008). It is thought that the power of metaphors makes the other figures of the speech to affect the behaviors and shape the attitudes or have a negative or positive image for the organization (Hogler et al., 2008). Metaphors are also used for organizational research. Metaphors have important roles in making group and individual decisions, during organizational studies, and in perceiving critical behaviors of organizations (Cornelissen et al., 2008).

In educational administration, metaphors guide the curriculum development studies, support teaching as well as critical thinking (Arslan, & Bayrakçı, 2006). Education concept is a kind of system which includes different and complex issues. In this system, evaluation has an important role like in all other organizations as defining whether educational service reaches its aim or not is important in order to develop education activities and to offer a better education (Oğuz, Yılmaz, & Taşdan, 2007). Metaphors are widely used in administration. The difficulty that the administrators face today is finding appropriate ways to understand the cases they have to deal with (Morgan, 1998).

Metaphors are very important dimensions of the conceptual schema of members of organization as they have a role as a lens in making the world meaningful and shaping the unclear evaluations. The metaphors make the unclear and abstract thoughts concrete, they mainly transfer the information in a holistic way and they make us to gain new point of views (Jacobs, & Heracleous, 2006).

Morgan (1998) in his book entitled "Metaphor in Administration and Organization Theories" describes the organization through metaphors. He explains that the organization and the administration with the help of seven metaphors. These metaphors are organizations like the type of machine, organism, brain, culture, and political system, jail of the spirits, flow and transformation and domination tools.

Tamimi (2005) conducted a research on whether the culture of an organization can be analyzed through metaphors. He examined the relationship between performance and price, support for risk-taking, power relations, organizational structure, culture, and communication dimen-

sions. As a result of the metaphors which were presented to the members and added, it was found that the dimensions of organizational culture are represented in a very powerful way. Evcim (2008) tried to propose the role of the metaphors on how the members of the organizations perceive the organizational culture and how they develop common understanding. So, it is tried to be examined if it is possible to observe and search organizational culture by using metaphors and what the limits of the metaphor based research are.

Aims of the Study

This study aims to determine the conceptions of primary school teachers for inspectors through metaphors. The question of "what are the general metaphors of primary school teachers for the inspectors?" was tried to answer according to the aim of the study.

Besides guiding and counseling duties, primary school inspectors conduct research, observation, and examination studies. It is believed that having an idea on how inspectors are regarded by the teachers guides the discussions on the roles, efficiency and the images of the inspectors.

Method

Universe and Workgroup

The primary schools in the city centre of Gaziantep (Şahinbey, Şehitkamil) constitute the population of this research. A total of 278 primary schools and 6515 teachers working for these schools were determined according to the data of 2008. Twenty primary schools were randomly selected to construct the sample. In this selection, the number of teachers at the schools was taken into consideration. All the teachers in the selected schools were included in the study and all valid questionnaires were taken into consideration. A total of 418 questionnaires from teachers were processed.

Data Collection Equipment and Analysis

A questionnaire was used as the main measurement instrument of the study. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included questions on general information. The second part included items which were constructed with the views of primary school inspectors. The ques-

tionnaire was prepared in the format of five-level Likert including statements from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. An open-ended question aiming to determine metaphoric perceptions for the conception of inspection was asked in the measurement instrument. Besides, an oral interview with a group of eight primary school inspectors was conducted where they were asked what an inspector is alike. The metaphors stated by the inspectors were used into the preparation of the measurement items. The questionnaires were first given to two instructors at Fırat University, the Faculty of Education. After this step, similar concepts were combined, some items were corrected and rewritten items were added in order to apply the latest version of the questionnaire. After the first analysis, the items in the questionnaire were evaluated in order to provide reliability. The latest study data were entered into SPSS to calculate counts/frequencies (f) and percentages (%) of the metaphors. The reliability factor was found .71 after the first analysis of the obtained data.

The latest version of the questionnaire included 31 metaphors and one open-ended question. The participants were asked to complete "The inspector is like… because…" The statistical data on the participants are as follows: experience dimension; 126 participants have between 0-5 years of experience, 136 participants have between 6-10 years of experience, 70 participants have between 11-15 years of experience, 86 participants have between 16 and above years of experience. 188 female and 230 male participants joined into the study. In terms of employment, there were 36 administrators, 220 primary school teachers and 162 subject teachers in the study. Fifty six participants have high school degree, 351 participants have B.A. degrees and 11 participants have M.A. degrees. The metaphors gotten from the open-ended question were listed and categorized under four headings. These headings are; "The Metaphors Emphasizing Un necessity of the Inspectors", "Criticizing Metaphors", "Positive Metaphors" and "Metaphors Containing Both Positive and Negative Points."

Data Analysis

The analysis of metaphors which were given in the questionnaire and the metaphors created by the participants were analyzed separately.

The evaluation of the given items in the questionnaire

a) The items between 4.0-3.5 (I agree-I totally agree)

The inspector is like a hunter waiting in ambush and looking for errors.

The inspector is like a poplar not abasing himself and not letting to be criticized.

The inspector is like a frame. He has a specific shape.

It can be indicated that participants have negative views on inspectors. The inspectors were found similar to "hunter", "poplar" and "frame." These metaphors do not refer to the same meaning.

b) The items between 2.5-1.0 (I disagree-I strongly disagree)

The inspector is like a stinging nettle. It burns but useful.

The inspector is an expert in education. He has educational knowledge.

The inspector is like a road map. He guides.

The inspector is a commander. He drives and manages you.

The inspector is like a painter. He pictures the situation of the teachers.

The inspector is like a potter master. He makes a progressive effort to help to the teachers.

The inspector is like a doctor. He diagnoses and cures the illnesses.

The inspector is like a mall. You find whatever you need.

The inspector is like a medicine. He prevents the diseases.

The inspector is like a sun. He lights up his around and informs.

The inspector is like a friend. He is close and a true friend.

The inspector is like an encyclopedia. Every kind of information can be found.

The inspector is like parents. He is kind and caring.

The inspector is like rain. He is always expected and brings happiness.

The metaphors above can be regarded as positive items. However, with the evaluation of the given answers it can be said that the participants have negative opinions for the inspectors.

c) The items between 3.5-2.5 (I have no idea)

The inspector is like a broken record. He always tells the same things.

The inspector is like a politician. What he says today does not match what he says tomorrow.

The inspector is like a king. He behaves like a king and gets attention.

The inspector is like leek. No one loves him.

The inspector is like gas stove. He is not needed at the schools any more.

The inspector is like drawbridge because it always shakes and his educational perspective is not reliable.

The inspector is like granite. It doesn't get softer whatever you do.

The inspector looks like the books on the shelves as no one is reading.

The inspector is like a judge. He decides on.

The inspector is like ice. He is cold.

The inspector is like a mossy lake. He is smooth and doesn't develop himself.

The inspector is the authority. He has the power to order, to prohibit and to make people do something.

The inspector is like a rod. He punishes the undisciplined ones.

The inspector is like a mentor. He advises and counsels.

Most of the metaphors above have negative meanings. It can be one of the reasons for the teachers to choose the option of "I have no idea". The results indicate that the teachers accept the metaphors which got 3 and more and avoid making comment for the items which got 2 and below.

The evaluation of the open-ended question

The participants developed a total of 119 metaphors in the open-ended question. They were categorized under four headings in order to evaluate.

a) The metaphors indicating that there is no need for the inspectors
• Unfashioned dress
• The number of 1 in multiplication
• Outdated product
• The footballer on the bench
• Outdated medicine
• Pimple
• Cigarette
• Gramophone record

b) The metaphors indicating criticism
- Some of them are given below;
- Pimple
- Gramophone record
- Overcast sky
- Computer virus
- Pine tree
- Relative
- Painter
- Tsunami and dark cloud
- Blind people
- Critics
- Second hand car
- Traffic cub
- Chameleon

c) Metaphors having positive meanings
- Compass
- Moon
- Parents
- Money
- Candle
- Guide of the Teachers
- A part of the whole system

d) Metaphors having both positive and negative meanings
- Some of them are given below;
- Lion
- Guest
- Almond
- Light
- Tourist guide
- April rain
- Sun
- Carpenter
- Mirror

Results

Metaphors are described as tools which aim to reflect a social reality. Inspection is one of the most important social realities of the educational system in Turkey. In this study aiming to determine the perceptions of primary school teachers through metaphors not only the metaphors stated as questionnaire items but also the metaphors created by the school stakeholders were found. These metaphors present extensive information on how the inspectors are perceived as well as their roles and behaviors. The metaphors also clarify the content of the inspection. It is seen that the inspection period which should develop the roles of stakeholders and improve the efficiency of the schools does not please the teachers. As a result, the roles of the inspectors are not regarded positively. This study brings out the necessity to renew and revise the inspection process.

With the help of the data collected from the study an analysis of the inspector concept was made. The results which are reached by the help of the analysis as follow;

1. By means of the metaphors, teachers expressed that they are not satisfied with the inspection process and that they do not get effective counseling from the inspectors.

2. It is found that the teachers tend to bring out negative aspects of the inspectors.

3. The metaphors describing the inspectors positively are average.

4. It can be said that metaphors which are all negative were not supported by the teachers. Generally, the items having average meaning were chosen.

5. The metaphors having negative meanings are produced more in open ended questions besides the metaphors developed by the writers.

6. Positive metaphors are created less comparing to positive metaphors.

Created metaphors mainly consist of negative associations. It is found that the participants used 76 negative metaphors, 20 metaphors including both negative and positive aspects, 8 metaphors indicating that the inspectors are not needed and just 12 positive metaphors. 7 metaphors were used with the same meaning. Totally, 123 metaphors were created.

The present study indicates that school stakeholders do not regard the

inspection process positively and so they assimilate the inspectors with negative metaphors. Similar findings were stated by Sünbül and İnandı (2005). It was emphasized that like in the past, the inspectors and teachers have negative attitudes for each other and the inspection is not useful for the teachers. And, also it was stated by Balcı (2007) that in the views of school principals, primary school inspectors are insufficient relating to education, teaching, in service training and guidance in school management areas. Contrast to the others, in the study by Döngel (2006), there were problems in inspection system while there should be inspectors and inspection system because there is no institution without inspection. On the other hand, Balaban (2005) indicates that communication problems may occur as the inspectors give much more importance to the technical issues than social issues in counseling and inspection activities. The inspectors should have a role both as a guide and helper. The inspectors who are active in this profession can use the results of this study as a self-evaluation in order to interpret their situations. As a result, they can get tips to be much more effective in this profession.

It must be searched that what type of situations make teachers think negatively for the inspectors. In addition to this, whether there is a meaningful difference between two groups or not may be searched. So, the comparison of perceptions of two groups-the inspectors and the teachers- will be very useful. This study puts forth the revision of the inspection for consideration. The inspection system and primary school inspection institution should be evaluated again with scientific and legal dimensions. Besides, needs and defects should be determined.

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