

# Head Teachers' Views about the Supervision of Private Courses in Turkey

By

<sup>1</sup>İzzet Döş, <sup>2</sup>Remzi Burçin Çetin & <sup>3</sup>Leyla Çiper

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education, Sütçü İmam University, Kahramanmaraş, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Social Sciences, Sütçü İmam University, Kahramanmaraş, Turkey

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Social Sciences, Sütçü İmam University, Kahramanmaraş, Turkey

## Abstract

*In this study we try to analyze one of the most frequently discussed topic, supervision and applying it to private sector in terms of private courses. Private tutoring is a rising fact that we can neither deny nor ignore. But just accepting their presence is not enough at all; because they are institutions for education whether you call them shadow or not. So that they also deserve supervision as much as any public or private school. However there are some problems about supervision of these institutions and our main aim is to investigate these problems and solutions prior to their head teachers' view. Some ten headteachers were interviewed and their thoughts were collected about supervision. The head teachers of these private courses are not happy with the current situation and they defined lots of problems such as the difference between public and private sectors, objectives of their institutions and supervision are not common, current policies and strategies for supervision do not work with private courses.*

**Keywords:** *Supervision, Private Tutoring, Private Course*

## 1. Introduction

Education is an important process that determines societies and individuals' roles and status. Thus, every individual has the right for proper education equally. Because education is the sum of processes in which individuals develop their skills, attitudes and values (Tezcan, 1985). All these lead it to be the instrument for creating more developed and richer countries. Although its products can only be ready in long-term, education, as an agent providing human source for social and economical developments, has become one of the most valuable and profitable investments. This explains why we have to pay attention to education than ever before.

Turkey as a candidate for EU membership, has to be aware of how and which roles are played by education in such social, cultural and economic atmosphere and take any necessary precautions which will help her to cope with any possible social, cultural and economic problems as well. Questioning and criticizing are those that we can run in such times because anything that can not be questioned remains as a big problem and it certainly grows day by day. On the other hand, Turkey, has well understand EU's education policies, and through these negotiations modernized her educational strategies, nevertheless it can not be denied that there are many reforms and precautions to be taken ahead (Dös & Cetin, 2013). If we consider that the world has been facing with the era of exams and Turkey is one of the countries examining students for many reasons such as entering higher education, academic programmes etc. Here, private tutoring is seen as a means of getting a head of others during the university admission process (Safarzynska). Tutoring is driven by a competitive climate and strong belief in the value of education for social and economic advancement (Bray, 2006). Also, supplementary private tutoring is a global trend following capitalism, in almost every developed and developing country, private tutoring is a shadow education system of the formal education system (Hon, 2010).

However, the problem is that though students are not being educated under equal circumstances, they are expected to enter same exams and compete with equal performance. But in some cases although the teachers are teaching properly at school, the students may still need tutoring especially if they are academically weak (Biswal, 1999). Such a paradox makes students and their families to search for alternative ways and support to win this race. Families' and students' expectations from higher education are rising as well as the number of students entering and failing entrance exams that can be said interference with competitors. Here the solution is simple: private supplementary tutoring can complement and repeat what tutees (full-time students) have learned in their daytime schools (Kwok, 2004). Private tutoring can provide more individualized instruction than is possible in public schools, using a more flexible delivery mechanism (Dang and Rogers, 2008). Also Kim and Lee (2004) stated that in South Korea unsatisfied demand for education by parents and students in a highly regulated educational environment has resulted in an enormous increase in private tutoring despite the government's strong policy measures to reduce it. It is clear that shadow education has major implications for social and economic development, and the sector deserves considerably more attention from both policy makers and researchers than it has received to date (Bray, 2006).

To understand the equity and productivity effects of the large and growing private tutoring sector and design effective policies, it is essential to understand the micro and macro factors that create demand for tutoring (Dang and Rogers, 2008). The imbalance in students' and families' supply and demand reveals some breaks between secondary and higher education which disturbs not only top level executives but also students, families, teachers and head teachers as well. This imbalance and disturbance has caused some institutions known as private courses or private tutoring centers to emerge as an alternative way of preparing for entrance exams. Many of the parents, most living in large cities, desire to have their children enter in higher education as much as their economic and socio cultural situation can afford. So that it can said that educational activities before higher education and affords during this process mainly consists of preparations for entrance exams. Whether it is clearly stated or not, such a scene is the natural outcome for the failure of many people, teachers, schools, states' education policies and many others directly related or not. However, overall achievements of students in entrance exams designs strategies for secondary schools and generally provide a source for organizational reputation. Substantial private tutoring industries can be found in countries as diverse economically and geographically as Romania, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Cambodia, United States, and the United Kingdom (Dang and Rogers, 2008). Graduates' achievements or failures are the main reason either to praise or satire secondary schools (Köse, 1999). Increased importance of tutoring becoming a crucial form of educational investment in many developing countries can have equity implications, since wealthier households are more likely to afford tutoring (Elbadawy, 2009). This contributes to increasing numbers of private courses and tutoring centers, for instance while the number of such institutions was 126 in 1980, it was 301 in 1985, 772 in 1990 and 1301 in 1995 (Büyükbas, 1997). In many countries, private tutoring has arisen as a parallel education sector that provides supplementary instruction to students enrolled in the public school system (Dang and Rogers, 2008). Private courses are not institutions peculiar to Turkey; they also operate quite widely in countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Greece where there are competition-based exam systems in transition between different levels of education and entrance to universities is based on standardized exams (Tok, 2013).

Another important cornerstone of the effective education is the supervision of the process as a whole body and developing it with the feedbacks received. Supervision and inspection as well is as important and critical as education itself because education is the process of making students part of society and also beneficial which force us to supervise and inspect it (Dös & Cetin, 2013). But here, we see some problems emerging from the bases of the system itself, such as different roles of educational supervision, inspection vs. instructional supervising (Tekin & Yilmaz, 2012). Supervision of an educational organization can be defined as observing, controlling and evaluating it prior to using human and any related sources in order to realizing pre-identified objectives (Demirkasimoglu, 2011). A successful

clinical supervision requires an approach that is simultaneously straightforward and confronting when it comes to competent application of technique, yet tactful and sensitive when encouraging the emergence of the teacher's personal style (Pajak, 2001).

Although schools and private courses seem to move towards the same direction they really differentiate within the context of institutional objectives, motives and strategies. Schools realizes their objectives as social organizations but private courses depend on supply and demand basis and are more economic oriented than one can expect from an ordinary secondary school. Moreover they have to apply any changes in system either positive or negative. Thus we can conclude that supervision of these similar but highly separate institutions must be shaped with different models. However, supervision is the key figure for achieving organizational objectives and thus should be effective and salutation based as much as possible in order to make it effective enough to answer the need. Such a type of supervision, resilient and effective, can be described as healthy one (Aydin, 2011).

Any institution for education should be supervised and inspected otherwise it can't be guarantied to satisfy neither states' nor parents' and students' expectations from any education system. But as it is stated above we suggest that supervision of public schools and private courses must be different as they are both based on different disciplines despite the fact that they both seem similar. Supervision is to help institutions with regard to their objectives and aims to develop their skill to be responsible against itself (Sones et al, 1970; as cited by Taymaz, 2011).

Unfortunately within the context of current system, policies, strategies and circumstances supervision is no more as effective as desired. Dös and Töremen (2009) stated that many stakeholders of the education developed negative metaphors for supervision. Unal and Gursel (2007) on the other hand, believes that though organizational structure of Turkish education system has not yet been designed with learning organization, supervision system is expected to act as if they were. Supervision of teachers needs to be reshaped in order to build a system capable of repairing current education system (Tekin & Yilmaz, 2012). Philosophical and structural regulations must be done beyond those related to their names, work areas or titles of the 4000 supervisors working at the moment (Aslanargun & Goksoy, 2013)

Supervision model and strategies should be modernized at once by considering the differences between public schools and private courses and then the process must be revised within these new regulations. The purpose of this study is to reveal views of executives of private courses about their supervision. In order to do it, these questions are tried to be answered;

1. What do executives of private courses think about current supervision system and its negative impacts and faults?
2. What do executives of private courses think about the effectiveness and necessity of the private courses?
3. What are the views of executives of private courses to improve supervision?
4. What do executives of private courses suggest to develop a much more effective supervision model?

## 2. Method

This is a study in which descriptive methods of qualitative research model are used and it is designed with conceptional techniques. Conceptional design is to focus on the concepts that we are aware but not have enough information about it, which means to search the things that we are not familiar enough (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2008:72).

### **Study Group**

Ten top - executives of private courses, all of whom are volunteers, in Kahramanmaraş province of Turkey were interviewed. These interviewees are all male and their servicing career ranges between five and fifteen years.

### **Measures**

All the data for this study were collected by means of a semi-structured form, consists of open ended questions and created by us. While developing our form, we scanned literature and reached some four questions to be used. Here are the questions we used;

1. *What are the problems of supervising private courses?*
2. *How can you define effectiveness for your institution?*
3. *What is the key role of supervision to make your institution much more effective?*
4. *How can you describe and even a totally new supervision model specially designed for private courses?*

As it can be understood, all these open ended questions are to reveal those top – executives real thoughts and ideas in terms of promoting them to express themselves. In order ensure that questions were crystal-clear, they were carefully clarified.

### **Data Analysis**

All the interviews were recorded with sound-recorders and then they were typed. All the data collected within this study were analyzed in terms of descriptive methods so that final conclusions were reached. Findings were proved with direct citations.

## **3. Findings**

### **1. The opinions of head teachers about the problems in supervision of private courses:**

Top-executives really argue that public schools and private courses are totally different institutions though they seem similar on the basis of education they provide. Thus, the idea that supervision of such different institutions should also be different is one of the most expressed. For example one said that *“Supervisor should be well equipped so that it can be concluded that s/he must be sure about having enough information about the institutions to be supervised. Public schools and private courses have different mechanisms and they can not be put into same case and supervisors should be well aware of it.”*

Another said that: *“First of all, organizational structures of public schools and private courses are not common and almost parents and students, themselves, inspect us from time to time which is not case for public schools.”* As it can be understood from these statements public schools and private courses are different institutions and have not anything in common even in organizational structure. Moreover, routine inspections can be said to be done by both parents and students as well, the main problem is official supervision still remains somewhat more than routine, ineffectiveness and useless.

One said that: *“A supervision must be designed with the aim of helping an institution to achieve its objectives rather checking for faults in terms of official things, papers etc.”* Another one said that: *“I am opposed to the word inspection. What is the main objective of educational supervision, improve or interrupt? In our routine supervising visits, they come and just check for some unnecessary documents and papers then go without giving us any vital help. Is that all?”*

We are just in the middle of information era and our world has facing with many changes. Such a situation makes it difficult to be up-to-date for many of us but supervisors should be ready for any forthcoming changes otherwise they will not be able to solve any problems caused by any of these

changes. So it can be said that old-fashioned supervising strategies and stakeholders' attitudes are other common problems for private courses. One said that: *"Thanks to latest technology we can manage anything by means of computer assisted systems, even absenteeism, and communication solutions. We are now in-touch with all our stakeholders and this brings us some more burdens that have to be carried. But when the supervisor asks me about paper-printed absent reports this makes me disappointed and hopeless. We, already, inform our parents just-in-time about their children's absentee. Do we really need to report and print them?"* Another said that: *"Supervisor should be up-to-date with anything latest related to education and should be able to help us."*

As it can be concluded from these statements supervising has some problems with technology and latest developments. Here, the main point is that supervision should consist of guidance rather than inspection, otherwise it turns into something which is unlikely to enhance current situation. One of the top-executives said that: *"Inspections sounds unsympathetic and boring. We are, already, responsible against our clients; parents and students, and it is nonsense for us these boring inspection visits. But, if we take them as supervising, professional help and guide then it becomes highly useful. While the society, parents and students expect us to improve our students chance of entering good colleges, why do they expect us to bring all necessary but also boring and rubbish papers on the desk during their visits? I think this is the main point of this argument."*

All these findings show us that there are some technical and methodological problems of educational supervision of private course in Turkey prior to top-executives views. Especially, official and those related to paper work are seen as unnecessary and a heavy burden to carry.

## **2. Head teachers' views about the effectiveness of their institutions:**

Turkey is passing through an exam oriented pathway; consequently, students or at least any member of society sometimes feel as a racing horse. Unfortunately, even half of the students share equal conditions; nevertheless, they are expected to attend this race and have the same chance of winning as others. Headteachers are well aware of this inequality and think it as an injustice. One said that: *"Public schools do not provide enough opportunities for students to enhance their academic skills that they need in entering exams. On the other hand, public schools have also some structural and technical problems such as over crowded population and not being as effective as desired in some parts of our country. So our private courses play a crucial role while alternating public schools and by-passing the system to make it as effective as students need."* So, it can be concluded that those private courses are consequences of supply-demand theory.

It can be said that not all the students come from the same or even similar socio-economic backgrounds which makes this race harder than ever. Top-executives pointed out that "private courses give them equal chance as they have same source books and same teachers". One of them stated that: *"There are some gaps and black holes in education system which leads us to find some more solutions; thus, private courses are prescription. Nobody wants to waste neither money nor time, therefore private courses fill these gaps and repair black holes and help those in need. If there wasn't institutions for private courses such as ours than people would exactly try to find some other ways, and most probably private tutoring would give help. However, private tutoring costs much more than private course; because we only demand the amount of just one class which you have to pay to private tutoring. So private courses are poor-men's friend and as economic as it can be, aren't they?"* Another said that: *"Turkey has been experiencing exams and private enterprises since 1960s. In fact high costs of private tutoring help us (private courses) to improve. Some parents can afford expensive one-to-one tutoring and give their children such a chance of being successful while the rest can not. On the other hand some parents can spare enough time to bring their children to those private tutors and be interested in their children academic skills and try to develop it; but many can not achieve this. Private courses save both money and time for parents. We do everything in our parents stead with much cheaper costs than private tutoring."*

As it can be seen top-executives on behalf of private courses claim that they are much cheaper and timesaver than private tutoring centers.

Public schools have high responsibilities against many stakeholders and their duties force them be ineffective. They do not have enough time, space, money and human source for many reasons and this is not the desired picture especially in such an *examania* era. On the other hand private courses are such institutions specially designed for these exams and preparing students to these exams. They have enough time and money to spare. One said that: *“We, private courses, have different teams each of which has separate duties such as preparing exams, applying extra studies, visiting parents etc. in our institutions. Although we have many students coming from different origins, academic backgrounds and capabilities, we can cope with any problems of such thanks to our professional teams.”*

One stated that: *“Private courses do not exist because state does not fulfill her responsibilities but in fact we are here to help her to discharge all the duties. Public schools set the fire and sometimes they are lack of enough power to fuel it and at this point private courses come to help. Each student wants to be special and as individuals they seek personal guidance and interest but, unfortunately public schools are not able to offer such a service. When you look at most of the high schools full of successful and distinguished students, they even are overcrowded and can not give enough help to their precious students. Thus; in fact, we are called “shadow education” and play our role at such a critical point.”* So that, according to headteachers private courses are not only a result of supply-demand process but also a natural output for the society’s desires and expectations. In short, private courses will exist till the end of exams and play their pre-designed role at critical points.

### **3. Head teachers’ views about key role of supervision to make their institution much more effective:**

Private courses are private and specially designed institutions and thus their supervision must be different from that of ordinary public schools’. Top-executives generally stated that in order to build effective supervision model stakeholders should exchange their ideas regularly on academic basis; otherwise, both ends interests will remain separate and unsatisfied. One said that: *“An effective supervision must be able to answer these two questions: what do you expect from this institution and to what degree it meets these expectations.”* These are really important questions and they should exactly be used to design an effective supervision model. Another stated that: *“Information is the key for being effective. If you don’t know enough about an institution so how can you be effective and supportive for it? Supervisors should collect enough data about private courses and carefully analyze them before criticism. This can only be achieved through a perfect collaboration.”* They also draw our attention to supervision process and activities. One said that: *“There should be some social, cultural and academic activities that bring private courses’ staff and supervisors together. If such a mutual interaction is built then it will become as effective as desired.”* Regular seminars and meeting will help us to build such an interaction and give both stakeholders a chance to share their ideas and practices. One pointed that: *“A supervisor shouldn’t be the one whom every teacher is afraid of and none desire to interact. This must be changed, but of course it should be done by both sides help.”* As it can be understood, a supervisor has some negative images among private courses’ teachers. Döş and Töremen (2009) also found similar result in their study on metaphorical concepts related to supervisor.

Some of head teachers really think that private courses are private and thus they, official inspectors, don’t need to supervise them. These private courses are already supervised by many such as parents, students, society, changing conditions etc. One of them stated that: *“I don’t think that supervision has much to do with private courses. We must make our customers happy to survive and there is an auto-control system established by these customers, parents and students.”* Another said that: *“We, private courses, have to renew ourselves and make necessary changes for further development each year. This means that we have to increase our affectivity day by day and never stay as same for our own sake. So how can supervision help us while it is already our duty to supervise?”* As it is understood that some of the head

teachers do not believe in the necessity for any supervising body. We think this is not fair as every institution needs to be controlled and supervised in order to make them much more efficient.

**4. Head teachers' views on creating a new supervision model specially designed for private courses:**

When they are asked to suggest a perfect model for the supervision of private courses, most of the head teachers suggest a more guiding and encouraging one in order to make these private courses more effective than they are now. One of them stated that: *"If you want to create a new model for supervision then all the stakeholders should come together. The government should consider that we, as private courses, are not public enemies and we play our role in the field of education. We should be appreciated for our studies as well as given help to develop ourselves. This is the perfect model for supervision."* Another one thought that *"In my opinion, supervision must consist of three stages; in the first one supervision should deal with the strategic plan of the year. Things should be planned clearly and carefully with the help of supervising body. The second one should be a "mid-term" one that controls the objectives of the pre-planned strategies for the institution and any help should be given in case of need. The last one should be done at the end of the year and it must be an overall control and evaluation for the institution."* This idea sounds great as it tries to create a step-by-step case and increase the quality of supervision for both sides.

Another one stated that: *"There should be some objectives so we can try to reach our goals and so that our activities throughout the year will be supervised."* Identifying objectives and goals for the institutions and then lead them to reach these objectives and goals are known as benchmarking. Döş and Cetin (2013) also suggested such a model for supervision in which schools and inspectors work in together to increase the quality and standards of the education.

One also suggested that: *"Supervising body should be revised and a new team should be set in which also some people who come from private sector and are well aware of what supervising private courses mean."* This idea is also great as it claims to create an effective team for effective supervising.

Finally as it is understood from the statements above, head teachers are not happy with the current policies and model of supervising and they have different but common ideas for a possible new model. In our opinion all these new ideas should be taken into consideration and collected in order to create a long desired supervision model. In fact all the ideas here show that head teachers of the private courses agree that supervision of their institutions must be different from that of public schools because they have distinguished principles and rules. The risks they take and the way they perform are not similar to any other institutions so that the help that they need is also different. There should be a helping-based and guidance & counseling oriented supervision model goes best with their needs.

**4. Conclusions and Discussion:**

All types of tutoring can help students keep up with work in school or consolidate work covered. A great advantage for parents is that it is more affordable than private schooling (Ireson, 2006). Entrepreneurs who create formal establishments for tutoring commonly call them centers, academies or institutes (Bray, 2007). After interviewing with head teachers of these private courses, it can be inferred that public schools and private courses have similar objectives and goals but also have different methods and strategies. Thus, we assume that their needs for supervision and models of the supervision must also be different from each other, or at least we think that current supervision policies are not efficient to make them effective. On the other hand it was these differences that caused private courses to start. Bray and Kwok (2003) stated that differences in the scale and nature of public schooling have a bearing on the demand for private schooling. However, all the head teachers agree that a good supervisor should equip himself with the latest information on education but they also agree that supervisors should also be resilient enough to cope with the problems under certain circumstances. Also, Yilmaz and Altinkurt

(2011) stated that there are many problems related to supervision of private courses in Turkey and every necessary precaution should eventually be taken against such problems.

Inspection or supervision is only useful as long as it improves some points in current system; otherwise it turns into an unnecessary and tedious work. Supervision ensures that work is well performed and it is even more important in the school system where teachers are helped to use their potentials for the benefit of the teaching learning process, in other words for quality education (Ogakwu, 2010). Thus, all the head teachers are in opinion of supervising should teach an institution how to be more efficient. So it can be said that a supervision model that is based on deficiencies. In other words, supervision should be based on constructive criticism and build new opportunities for the institutions. Supervisors must focus on the process of education rather than official and paper works (Köroğlu and Oğuz, 2011: Gündüz, 2010: Paşamemişoğlu and Sağır, 2008).

Each year, some regulations have been made in order to improve current system and create a perfect system but many of these changes do not work. In fact most of the time, supervisors either do not hear these changes and regulations or be late to apply them, so it seems that there is a big problem with internal communication within the ministry. Head teachers think that this leads to some misapplications during the supervising process. While an inspector wants to check some official documents, another one thinks them as rubbish and unnecessary, which means that there must be coherence among these supervising actions and a common framework should be established immediately. Also some of the head teachers suggested that a web-based and up-to-date framework would best work and be much useful to make supervising and supervised institutions ready for any changes. Janssens and Amelvoort (2008) stated that institutions should inspect themselves by means of a common framework and should help each other while also given help by supervisors.

It seems that there is an image of private courses which based on prejudice and misunderstandings such as they are institutions for rich and this leads to an inequity for education right. On the contrary, producing much wiser solutions to the problems of education by means of improving public schools and private courses seems better than harsh criticism (Ogden, 2010: Go, 2005).

Many studies show that traditional supervision do not improve education in deed, thus a totally new and differentiated supervision model should be created and applied (Plan, 2008). World-wide studies have emphasized that decentralized practices for supervising and providing support to teachers at school level can succeed (Tyagi, 2009). If the main objective of supervision is to improve education at all then it must be done under the collaboration of both sides, supervising and supervised bodies, in order to ruin old fashioned and ineffective model on which a new and contemporary model will be established (Beycioğlu and Dönmez, 2009). On the other hand, supervisors; if you take supervising as an improvement should have a more democratic attitude (Oğuz, Yılmaz and Taşdan, 2007).

## 5. Acknowledgements

Turkish has a word “dershane” which means that an education centre in which students study for many entrance exams. Our study is about these centres and English words such as “private tutoring, supplementary tutoring, private course” are all used for it.

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