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Turkish Teachers under Surveillance: An Analysis of Alo 147 Call Line Based on Teachers' Opinions*

Naciye AKSOY**
Gazi University

Birol ALGAN***
Ankara University

Ebru EREN DENİZ****
Ankara University

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to make a critical analysis of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) "ALO 147" call line, or more widely known as 'teacher report line,' based on teacher experiences and views. The study seeks to present status of information and awareness of teachers about the "ALO 147" call line, views of teachers about the practice, and experiences of teachers directly or indirectly affected thereby. Qualitative research approach was used in the study. The study group is consisted of 101 teachers and 3 vice-principals working in different branches and levels in 4 districts of Ankara. Document review, self-completed questionnaire (including open ended and close ended questions) and semi-structured face-to-face interview technique were used for collecting data. Collected data were thematically classified in terms of research questions and descriptive analyses were made thereon. The findings of the study showed that ALO 147 application adversely affects the relations of the majority of teachers with their colleagues, parents, and students. Teachers think that the ALO 147 call line was established to control teachers, force them to obey, and establish pressure and hegemony over them. The teachers also see the call line as a tool to discredit the teaching profession.

Keywords: *Public School Teachers, Surveillance, Control, Denunciation.*

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** Naciye Aksoy is Professor in Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: naciye@gazi.edu.tr

*** Birol Algan is Ph.D. candidate in Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences. Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: birolalgan@hotmail.com

**** Ebru Eren Deniz is Ph.D. candidate in Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences. Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: kemane84@hotmail.com

Introduction

Having been involved in behaviors, habits, and preferences of individuals at home, business, street, playgrounds, shopping and entertainment venues, schools, prisons, hospitals, and religious spaces, in short anywhere and any instance of daily life, surveillance is not a new phenomenon in history of humanity. As a privileged form of modern knowledge production, organizational management, and social control (Monahan and Torres, 2010), surveillance is one of the longstanding techniques of power for hundreds of years and “served as the major domination mechanism of tribes, empires, monarchies, and religions throughout the pre-modern times” (Dolgun, 2008:22). Foucault (1977) suggested that social control was exercised via force in preindustrial Western societies, via codes of law during the modern period, and that surveillance became the most important tool of discipline in late modern period (as cited in Hope, 2010). Furthermore, disciplinary powers, according to Foucault (2006), were in charge of training human beings and that the aim of discipline was to create dependent, trained, and docile bodies. Similarly Gillom (2010) asserted that surveillance was not a vision but establishment of domination as follows: “If we think of surveillance as just watching, we err, because surveillance is newer just watching. It’s not just vision, but *supervision*. It’s not just sight, but *oversight*. Surveillance assumes, advances and/or creates a relationship of domination” (p.205). Having survived all historical periods, surveillance acquired a central position among power and social control practices and further penetrated into daily life and social relations subsequent to 1970s, when neoliberal economic policies were accelerated, also thanks to the new communication technologies, which removed the space and time restrictions. This is because of the fact that neoliberal economic policies need to further monitor and control individuals in order to feed on such elements as productivity, performance, standardization, governance, transparency, and accountability (Aslantaş-Toktaş, Binark, Dikmen, Fidaner, Küzeci, Özaygen, 2012).

Throughout the historical process, educational institutions have been among the institutions where mass surveillance is the most prevalent. Educational institutions assumed the very function of controlling and disciplining students and education workers in line with dominant political, economic, and social conditions and values via various surveillance methods. Having attached great importance to school administration, Romans used to control and monitor students not only at school, but also at prayer temples and clubhouses. Similarly, historical examples of control via mass surveillance include the fact that each primary school in India has a dedicated monitor, that an administrator is appointed to each school with more than 40 students in Israel (Bursalıoğlu, 1991), that a semicircular seating arrangement was designed by Jeremy Bentham in order to facilitate observing students by teachers in a few schools at the end of 18th Century (Markus, 1993; cited in Hope, 2010), and that a formal and strict monitorial system was used in Lancasterian schools at the beginning of 19th century (Hall, 2003; cited in Hope, 2010). As mentioned above regarding the historical process of surveillance, monitoring students in educational institutions is not a novel disposition either. The traditional surveillance as exercised via keeping personal records of students, standardized school uniforms, strict disciplinary policies, high stake testing, security personnel, police, keeping daily attendance records, gathering

information via class prefect (monitor), and body and bag search, has now become far more widespread and evident through new communication technologies (closed-circuit television, cameras, digital identity cards used for accessing libraries, cafeterias, etc.). According to Barrow (1999) the aim of these control techniques is to facilitate producing manageable and obedient populations (cited in Dawson, 2006).

Those under surveillance and control in educational institutions are naturally not only limited to the students. Educational workers, and especially the teachers, are under control via various methods and for various reasons. In fact teachers both surveil, and are being surveiled in the education institutions. Webb, Briscoe and Mussman (2009:7) referred to Warren, one of those defended that educational practice of teachers must have been surveiled, as follows:

Warren (1968) believed that teachers should be surveiled because they easily said one thing but did another. Warren hypothesized that surveillance was a more effective way to hold teachers accountable than merely acquiring symbolic verbal acceptance of school policy. Surveillance provided administrators efficient ways to coerce teachers through “the expectation of punishment for failure to conform to an influence effect”.

Neoliberal economic policies relying on such values as segregation, sorting, preference, accountability, and competition, allege that social justice can only be realized via “free market”. In the context thereof, educational practices and institutions as listed amongst the state ideological apparatuses by Althusser (2010) have been actively used and still being utilized in realization of in reproduction of neoliberal ideology. For neoliberal ideology, furnishing students, as the future labor force, with appropriate skills and ensuring that they have business ethics and at the same time they are docile and obedient, can be managed mostly upon more frequent and closer surveillance and control of the actions of teachers. In that respect “surveillance effects target teachers to conform their practice to knowledge differentiation in accordance with neoliberal ideology” (Webb, Briscoe and Mussman, 2009, p. 9).

Turkey was integrated into capitalist countries by implementing neoliberal economic policies as from 1980s. In the process, education policies in line with neoliberal ideology were adopted, education ceased to be a right any longer, and teaching profession was subject to great erosion. One of the last practices, which accelerated erosion, has been the Alo 147 call line. Political power activated a call line as way of surveilling and controlling teachers based on concerns behind closed doors that teachers might diverge from official ideology and the domination of political power might be shaken off its foundation. Turkish Ministry of National Education Communication Centre (MEBİM), or more widely known as “ALO 147” call line, that was established within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) went into service on March 1st, 2012. According to the information provided in the web-site of the Ministry, the mission of the unit is “to put into process all kinds of requests, complaints, views-recommendations, denunciations, and questions under the right to information act”. Furthermore, the relevant web-site of the Ministry also claims that all calls arriving at the communication centre will be directly answered by specialists and the centre will use its best efforts to resolve requests within one contact, that in case an

immediate resolution is not available due to the fact that incoming calls require further examination or investigation, or necessitate Ministry operation, the callers will be contacted about their requests within 72 hours via telephone, SMS, or e-mail, upon instantaneous communication with relevant institutions and organizations, and that callers will be charged as per current tariffs of their operator. Nevertheless, news in the media suggest that the ALO 147 line has become a practice that increased surveillance and oppression on teachers and has been transformed into a report line against teachers, rather than being used for resolving requests by parents and students in order to increase the “quality of schools”.

In the context thereof, the general aim of this study is to examine the “ALO 147” call line as introduced by Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Communication Centre, based on teachers’ views and evaluations. In the scope thereof the study sought answers for the following questions:

1. What are the subjects of inbound calls received by ALO 147 call line?
2. Who originate the calls to ALO 147 call line?
3. How do educators evaluate ALO 147 call line?
4. How does ALO 147 call line affect the relations of educators with their colleagues, students, and parents, along with in-class experience?
5. What are the experiences of educators, who were subject to investigation due to complaints received by ALO 147 call line?
6. What are the bases of complaints directed to educators, who were subject to investigation due to complaints received by ALO 147 call line?

Limitations

The data of the study were limited to the views of 101 teachers and 3 vice-principals serving at public schools in Ankara city.

Documents utilized in the study were limited to MoNE documentation dated between March 1st, 2002 and May 31st, 2013.

Method

Design of the Study

The study was designed in line with qualitative research approach and that the problems and sub-problems were responded upon analysis of data collected by document review, questionnaire, and face-to-face interviews. Qualitative study is defined as “the research, in which observation, interview, and document analysis methods are used, and a qualitative process aimed to present perception and events in natural environment in a realistic and holistic way is followed” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In the context thereof, the study was performed in the scope of a qualitative approach, which prioritized to interpret and construe the aspects of “ALO 147” application by examining the same in a multiple and different perspective. The views and experiences of the educators regarding “ALO 147” application were collected by participants’ free responds to self-completed

questionnaires including close and open ended items and by face-to-face interviews. By means of the questionnaire the participants were allowed to convey their views without time and space limitations. On the other hand, a phenomenological approach was adopted by making face-to-face interviews with educators, against whom complaints were filed through “ALO 147” call line. Phenomenology is a research design, which focuses on phenomena that we recognize in daily life but deprived of a deeper and detailed understanding thereof, and which attempts to define the descriptions, interpretation, experience, perception, orientation, feelings, judgments, and emotions of individuals, who experience the aforementioned events personally, on the foregoing phenomena and events (Patton, 2002:104; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In this study, it was aimed to describe in detail the “MoNE ALO 147” call line, about which generally we have a partial information via press and social media, and the first hand experience, emotions, and perceptions of educators, who were directly affected by the application on the grounds that they had been subject to investigations in connection therewith.

Participants

Participants of the study comprised of 101 teachers and three (3) vice-principals who served in public schools in Mamak, Çankaya, Elmadağ, and Yenimahalle districts of Ankara. Participants were established by maximum variation, one of the methods of purposeful sampling. The basic objective of maximum variation sampling is to reflect to a maximum extent in a relatively small-sized sample, the variety of individuals, who might have been parties to a problem (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). In this study, it was aimed to reflect to a maximum extent the variety of perspectives of educators regarding “ALO 147” application by establishing a relatively small-sized sample of educators by emphasizing variation, from primary schools, secondary schools, and high schools located in different districts of Ankara. 93 participant teachers and three vice-principals declared their views and thoughts on “ALO-147” application in written form, and face-to-face interviews were made with eight (8) teachers. Information regarding the educators, who comprised the study group, is provided in Table 1.

The personal information of teachers participated in the study are provided in Table 1. Accordingly 104 teachers, with 74 women and 30 men, participated in the study. 33 (31%) out of these teachers had an experience of 21 years and above, where 11 (10,6%) had 5 years and less. The number of teachers with union membership was 59 (56,7%), where that of teachers without union membership was 45 (43,3%). Only 58 teachers replied the item with regarding the name of their union. As seen in Table 1, the largest voluntary participation in the study was from teachers, who are members of Eğitim-Sen (55,2%), the least participation came from teachers, who are members of other unions (Anadolu Eğitim Sen, Aktif Eğitim Sen) with 3,4%.

Table1. Personal Information of Participants

Sex	N	%
Women	74	71,2
Men	30	28,8
Total	104	100
Seniority		
5 years and less	11	10,6
6-10 years	16	15,4
11-15 years	21	20,2
16-20 years	23	22,1
21 years and above	33	31,7
Total	104	100
Educational Level of Service		
Primary School	39	37,5
Secondary School	25	24,0
High School	40	38,5
Total	104	100
Position		
Vice-Principal	3	2,9
Teacher	101	97,1
Total	104	100
Union Membership		
Yes	59	56,7
No	45	43,3
Total	104	100,0
Affiliated Union		
Eğitim Bir Sen	7	12,1
Türk Eğitim Sen	11	19,0
Eğitim Sen	32	55,2
Eğitim-İş	6	10,3
Other	2	3,4
Total	58	100

Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the study were collected by document review, self-completed questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. In order to seek answers for the first sub-problem of the study, documents as prepared by MoNE, which included numeric data regarding applications received by MoNE Communication Center ALO 147 call center, were reviewed. In general, the view and evaluations of the educators on ALO 147 application were collected via questionnaire. Data may be collected by questionnaires via “open-ended/unstructured” or “close-ended/structured” items (Karasar, 1999). Open-ended questions are preferred in case the participants are requested to respond freely, and that the source person has the freedom of responding the items in general limits, within the scope and depth of one’s own will, via one’s own narration. Whereas, the close-ended items constitute the type of questions, in which the participants are provided with the probable choices of answers (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, 2008; Karasar, 1999). In the study, both the close-ended items regarding personal information of participants, and open-ended items, in order to allow participants to respond in detail and freely their views regarding “ALO 147” application, were used in items. Having been accordingly prepared, the form included 7 close-ended, and 10 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was finalized upon presentation of questions to expert view. The cover page of the questionnaire included a presentation letter on the purpose and importance of the study, the principle of confidentiality of the study data, the importance and value of the information and assistance of participants, and how to answer the questions. The researchers contacted with the schools by means of previously met teachers and distributed the questionnaires to teachers, who were voluntary to participate in the study upon explanation. The participants were granted sufficient time for completion of the questionnaires and then the completed questionnaires were collected and evaluated. The experiences of educators, who were subject to investigations upon application to ALO 147 call center and who voluntarily participated in the study were collected by face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interview forms were prepared for face-to-face interviews. The forms included seven (7) close-ended and 16 open-ended questions and additional questions were involved according to the responses of the participants.

The data were analyzed descriptively. Descriptive analysis is summarized and interpreted according to previously set themes, themes emerged by research questions, and questions or aspects used in interview and observation processes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The data collected in this study were described and interpreted according to the research questions. In order to facilitate comprehensibility, similar and dissimilar questions were tabulated by frequency and percentages and occasionally direct citations were involved. For direct citations capital letter “Q” used for the participants filled the self-completed questionnaire and “G” used for the participants who are subjected to investigation.

Findings

Upon review of the document regarding the response of Nabi Avcı, Minister of National Education, dated July 12th, 2013, against parliamentary question No.30646425/610/1721218 that was presented to the Grand Assembly of Republic of Turkey, and the document as prepared by the Ministry of National Education Communication Center – 147, including May 2013 data, it was seen that the application received at MoNE Communication Center were grouped under five main topics (information, request, view-recommendation, complaint, and denunciation). The application topics and distribution thereof are provided in Table 2. Upon review of Table 2 it is seen that both during the year subsequent to the establishment of the center, and in May, 2013, the majority (90%) of applications were for information. However the May 2013 data showed that there was a considerable increase in the number of applications regarding complaints.

Table 2. Applications Received at MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center by Topics

Application Topics	Number (March 1 st , 2012- March 21 st , 2013)*	%	Number (May 2013)**	%
Information	924.648	88,2	76.830	89,8
Request	55.475	5,3	2.482	2,9
View- Recommendation	15.788	1,5	621	0,7
Complaint	49.218	4,7	5.392	6,3
Denunciation	3.048	0,3	219	0,3
Total	1.048.177	100	85.544	100

Source: (*) The response of Nabi Avcı, Minister of National Education, dated July 12th, 2013, against parliamentary question No. 30646425/610/1721218 that was presented to the Grand Assembly of Republic of Turkey (**) MoNE Communication Center – 147, May 2013 data.

Table 3 provides data regarding the distribution of 10 top originator professions regarding the inbound calls received at MONE ALO-147 Communication Center in the scope of complaints topic (Data provided for March 1st, 2012- March 21st, 2013 and May 2103). Upon review of Table3, it is seen that the originators of the calls in the scope of complaints were primarily the housewives, self-employed persons, and students. The calls by students pertaining to complaints increased from 18.5% between March 1st, 2012 and March 21st, 2013 to 46.3% in May 2013. It can be said that this may be an indication of the fact that students, who cannot express their problems regarding their educational life, seek a solution by using the call line. In the response of Nabi Avcı, Minister of National Education, dated July 12th, 2013, against parliamentary question No.30646425/610/1721218 that was presented to the Grand Assembly of Republic of Turkey, it was stated that out of 48.218 complaint applications, 21.868 (44,3%) were finalized at first call on the grounds that the “complaints were not based on concrete proof,” the

“personal information could not have been confirmed via MERNIS system,” and “the originators withdrew their complaints after they were informed that the personal information would be disclosed upon submission of the case to the court,” and that 27.350 cases (55,57%) were directed to regional and central support offices.

Table 3. Distribution of 10 Top Originator Professions Regarding the Inbound Calls Received at MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center in the Scope of Complaints Topic (March 1st, 2012- March 21st, 2013).

Professions	(March 1 st , 2012- March 21 st , 2013)*%	(May 2013)**%
Housewife	27,4	15,2
Self-employed	21,4	16,6
Student	18,5	46,3
Teacher	13,3	7,2
Laborer	5,1	6,6
Officer	4,7	2,6
Merchant	4,7	2,6
Civil Servant	1,8	1,0
Driver	1,8	-
Doctor	1,3	-
Military Personnel	-	1,0
Engineer	-	0,9
Total	100	100

Source: (*)The response of Nabi Avcı, Minister of National Education, dated July 12th, 2013, against parliamentary question No. 30646425/610/1721218 that was presented to the Grand Assembly of Republic of Turkey (**) MoNE Communication Center – 147, May 2013 data.

Table 4 provides the distribution of sub-topics of 5,392 inbound calls received at MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center in the scope of complaints topic in May 2013. As it can be seen on the table complaints against the teachers ranked the first (40,7%) in the list followed by that of against school administrations by 35,2%. It is observed that complaints pertaining to other topics were quite low. The document prepared by MONE Communication Center (ALO 147) covering the 2013 data stated that out of 2.193 cases, 1.626 (74,15%) were finalized at first call on the grounds that the “complaints were not based on concrete proof,” the “personal information could not have been confirmed via MERNIS system,” and “the originators withdrew their complaints after they were informed that the personal information would be disclosed upon submission of the case to the court,” and that 567 cases (25,85%) were directed to regional and central support offices.

Table 4. Distribution of Sub-topics of Inbound Calls Received at MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center in the Scope of Complaints Topic (May 2013 Data)

Complaint Sub-Topics	Number	%
Discontent with teachers	2193	40,7
Discontent with administration	1897	35,2
Irregular acts by MONE	495	9,2
Fees	171	3,2
Girls not sent to school	171	3,2
Irregular acts by other private education institutions	108	2,0
Mobile education	99	1,8
School bells	81	1,5
Cafeteria operation	53	1,0
Irregular acts by private teaching institutions	31	0,6
Sexual abuse	26	0,5
Clothing	14	0,3
Irregular acts by private rehabilitation centers	13	0,2
School milk distribution (incomplete distribution)	8	0,1
Illegal health report request for YGS	6	0,1
In sufficiency of school buildings	5	0,1
Use - purchasing of ancillary learning materials	5	0,1
Diploma fee	4	0,1
Earthquake resistance/reinforcement of school buildings	4	0,1
Illegal health report request for SBS	4	0,1
Irregularities pertaining to tenders	3	0,1
Distribution of school milk not suitable for Turkish Food Codex	1	0,0
Total	5.392	100

Source: MoNE Communication Center – 147, May 2013 data.

The complaints filed to MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center by regions are provided in Table 5 (2013 May 2013). Data in Table 5 are in parallel with Table 4. It is seen that the complaints by regions were made primarily against teachers by 40,2% as followed by that of against school administrations. This suggested that as it was covered in the media when the call line was launched, it became an application by which control and pressure of teachers were increased and that it was transformed into “denunciation against teachers” line.

Table 5. Complaints Filed to MoNE ALO-147 Communication Center by Regions (2013 May 2013)

Application Topic	Marmara Region	Central Anatolia	Mediterranean Region	Aegean region	South-Eastern Anatolia Region	Black Sea Region	Eastern Anatolia Region	Total	%
Complaints Against Administration									
Discontent With Administration / Negative Attitude And Behaviors Against Students.	454	234	150	151	96	72	42	1199	24,4
Discontent With Administration/ Negative Attitude And Behaviors Against Parents.	155	71	53	48	18	17	13	375	7,6
Discontent With Administration/ Failing To Meet Physical And Infrastructural Needs Of School	50	39	18	24	20	9	6	166	3,4
Total	659	344	221	223	134	98	61	1740	35,4
Complaints Against Teachers									
Discontent With Teachers/Class Teachers	406	237	130	133	57	38	46	1047	21,3
Discontent With Teachers/Subject-Matter Teachers	319	226	108	98	72	62	48	933	18,9
Total	725	463	238	231	129	100	94	1980	40,2
Other Complaints (Total)	416	233	141	122	165	81	41	1199	24,4
Total								4919	100

Source: MoNE Communication Center – 147, May 2013 data.

It is evident from Table 6 that the Ministry of National Education did not inform the teacher in any way whatsoever, failed to collect their opinions and to involve them in decision-making processes during the processes in which the ALO-147 line was established and implemented. The teachers were informed about the ALO-147 line by the channels other than the Ministry, and especially by the written and visual media and Internet. The teachers became aware of the application generally by their conversation with colleagues, school administration, and as a result of investigations filed against their colleagues via ALO- 147. In line with the responses of the teachers enrolled in the study, two teachers were informed about the application by this study hereby, and two teachers were informed by their unions. Taking into consideration that more than half (56%) of the teachers enrolled in the study were union members, the fact that only two teachers were informed about the ALO-147 application by their unions suggested

that the teachers' unions also did not inform the teachers about the application or simply disregarded.

Table 6. Source of Information of Teachers About ALO 147 Application

Sources of Information	n	%
Printed-visual media/ Internet	27	35,1
Complaint file against colleague	11	14,3
Students	3	3,9
Conversations at school	19	24,6
School administration	8	10,4
Complaint against oneself	2	2,6
Parents	2	2,6
By means of this study	2	2,6
Union	2	2,6
District National Education Directorate	1	1,3
TOTAL	77	100

Views of Teachers Regarding the Purpose of Establishment of ALO 147 Application

More than half of the teacher enrolled in the study thought that ALO 147 call line was established to control and discredit themselves and their profession, and that the control would be realized via complaints, threatening, denunciation, sneaking, and intimidation. For instance a female teacher serving at middle school, with at least 16 years of professional experience, who thought that the purpose of establishment of ALO-147 call line was to discredit teaching profession, stated her feelings as follows:

(...) consuming education and training. It was established to humiliate the teachers, who are sensitive to all social events, and exhibit exemplary behaviors, and lower down their position in the society (Q80).

Similarly, another female teacher, a member of Egitim-Sen union, serving as primary school teacher explained her view regarding both control, and discrediting as follows:

(...) its purpose of establishment is to humiliate teachers in front of parents, and offend teaching profession. While we already have a control mechanism comprised of school administration and inspectors, now we also have an unconscious parent control (Q54).

Believing in that ALO-147 application is a tool of pressure on teachers, a male teacher serving at high school declared that

The purpose of ALO-147 application is to place a strain on teachers. To dominate them, to speak softly and carry a big stick... (Q1).

Some other teachers described the purpose of establishment of ALO-147 call line using terms corresponding to hegemony concept. For instance a female teacher serving at a high school is as follows;

(...) singling out a teacher who does not think like the political power, and who does not impose the educational system of the political power and making them the same with the others (Q30).

Again, a female teacher serving at high school stated that;

It's a threatening against teacher. It is a pretext created by the Ministry to file investigations against teachers with undesired thoughts, teachers that become members of unions, whenever it deems necessary, and to relegate them to other schools (Q18).

Two teachers stated that the purpose of establishment of ALO-147 call line was political populism. For instance, a male teacher, a member of Anadolu Egitim Sen, with 5 years and less experience expressed his views as "ingratiating oneself into peoples' favor" (Q25), while another teacher, a member of Egitim Sen, said "Its purpose of establishment is adulation. It is quite obvious that it will be used beyond its purpose. This is populism." (Q55).

Some other teachers approach the application more moderately by assessing the same as increasing the quality of education by finding solutions to certain questions encountered in education-training, facilitating communication, and providing students with an opportunity to express the matters of discontent.

Emotions and Thoughts of Teachers Towards ALO 147 Application

Majority of the teachers, who had been source of the data, expressed negative emotions and thoughts against ALO-147 application. Teachers referred to such words as fear, concern, unhappiness, unrest, lack of confidence, and anger when expressing their negative emotions and thoughts towards the application. For instance, a female teachers, with 20 years and more professional experience, who served at a high school and has no union membership expressed her feelings as "I felt awful. I thought that this line will be called necessarily or unnecessarily, and therefore teachers will be forced to defend themselves and humiliated" (Q26).

Similarly, another female history teacher with more than 20 years of experience said "I felt bad. Since, students will complain about all our acts, all our words, and we will be defending ourselves against inspectors. I felt I was grabbed by throat. I am convinced that the Ministry will misuse this" (Q18).

The Effect of ALO 147 Application of the Relation of Teachers with Their Colleagues

Nearly half of the participants involved in interviews stated that the ALO 147 application did not have any effect on their relations with their colleagues, but they were in solidarity with colleagues, who were subject to investigation.

Regarding the reason of the fact that her relations were not affected, a female teacher serving at a high school, with more than 15 years of experience said “Frankly speaking it doesn’t have any effect. I am doing my job”.(Q30)

Another female teacher, a member of Egitim Sen, with more than 10 years of experience in primary school said; “I doesn’t have any effect. Since all our colleagues know it is unnecessary”. (Q38).

Another female teacher with 21 years and more primary school experience, without any union membership, said “It doesn’t affect our relation with colleagues at all. Since we, the teachers, know, how and with whom, to communicate. As with each society, and profession there also are problematic people among teachers. As a matter of fact everybody knows, how and with whom, to enter into dialogue”. (Q73)

One of the female teachers, with 15 and more years of experience in primary school, member to Egitim Sen, said “It doesn’t affect my relations to colleagues. Nevertheless, since the complaints come on after another, we, the colleagues, share this bitter situation by supporting each other”. (Q40)

The solidarity example was more likely to be expressed by teacher who had been subject to investigations. Some teachers who had been subject to investigations summarized the situation as follows:

Our colleagues are worried! I was also supported by them. Considering what I am experiencing today may also be experienced in future in a different way with more sanctions, we talked especially with friends from Egitim Sen. We said that (ALO) 147 was a derogatory line. My friends told me “if it happened to you, and it may to us,” and in one case it was just happened like that. An English teacher was complained by a parent. I brought together the parent and the teacher. “I told them this is wrong, we can handle this by talking to each other, by dialogue,” and they fixed it. They still see each other (G2, Male, 21 years and more, Türk Egitim Sen).

They were also upset. They thought that we didn’t deserve it. They were nice to us and shared my sorrow. I am doing my best to do my job (G3, Female, 21 years and more, Egitim Sen).

They reacted against the fact that one could instigate an investigation against us without disclosing their identity. Teachers lent support. There could be someone that you don’t like, you are jealous with, or you want her or him harmed, then you don’t even need to be a parent; it’s easy you can give a call to 147, tell that you don’t like such habit of someone, or that my child was misbehaved; and this is easy for the relevant teacher to be subjected to an investigation. Therefore, there emerged unrest in all. It may happen to oneself. It happened to others. Teachers lent their support .(G4, Female, 11 years and more, Egitim Sen)

The other half of the participants said that their relations with colleagues were negatively affected. The participants said that there was a lack of confidence among the colleagues, and that there were ongoing debates between the teachers. Q5, a male teacher, a member of Egitim Sen, with at least 20 years of experience in high school expressed his anger such as: “It affects. You can’t even make jokes. God damn whoever issued it.”

A female teacher, without union membership, emphasizing the “confidence” notion in her expressions underscored that ;“It affects, naturally. A colleague too may file a complaint against another colleague” (Q84).

Q58, a female teacher, who was a member of Eđitim Sen, with 21 years and more primary school experience, told that “[T]hey asked to themselves such questions as ‘Whose parent made that complaint,’ ‘What was the fault of the teacher,’ and ‘Who is right’.”

Q55, a teacher serving at primary school, with 21 years and more experience, who is a member of Eđitim Sen said “It does affect. Albeit rare, I conduct discussions with friends, who think that the application was OK. We have debates due to wrong information regarding the events of the practice of the application.”

Q47, a female teacher with 15 and more years of experience in primary school, who was not a union member, emphasized that “a confidence problem emerged among the colleagues. We have heard a lot of experiences, and thus we have started to become suspicious of everybody”.

Q37, a female teacher with more than 5 years of experience in primary school and a member of Eđitim Sen said that “It creates the doubt among the class teachers that they might have filed complaints against each other”.

G6, one of the Eđitim Sen member female teachers, who had been subject to investigation, with 16 years and more experience in middle school reminded that

Our friends were surprised. Nevertheless, the truly honest ones among those support the political power remain silent, however the dishonest say ‘You shouldn’t have done that’. If they have a minimum level of humane values, they remain silent; if they are spineless they look at you as if she or he thinks we deserved it.

On the basis of the expressions of teachers, one can say that the ALO 147 line damages the relationship between the teachers, and paves the way for fading away of such senses as collaboration, solidarity, sharing, and trust.

Some of the teachers, although thought that ALO 147 application did not affect their relations with colleagues, indicated that in fact the application affected the colleague relations based on their expressions regarding the events they had witnessed to. Q49, a female teacher with 21 years and more experience in primary school, without any union membership, stated that “the fact that our friends are being condemned and getting under suspicion upsets us. It doesn’t affect our relations. (Yet) there emerged squabbling and resentments among some of our friends.”

Q43, a female teacher with 11 years and more experience in middle school, without any union membership, said that “It doesn’t affect. Yet we know that in case of problems among teachers, some teachers call 147 to file complaints against each other.”

Based on the expressions of the participants, it can be said that the teachers were not affected by the application, since there had been no complaints filed

personally against them; however they were concerned about the possible deterioration of their relations due to the application.

The Effect of ALO 147 Application of Relation of Teachers with Their Students

One of the aspects of ALO 147 line, which could be considered negative, is the fact that it affects the relationship of teachers with students. Great majority of participants enrolled in the study stated that their relationship with students was deteriorated. The expressions which suggested the foregoing include lack of confidence between teacher and students, restriction of relationship, punishment or threatening of teacher by students, teachers' view of students as snouts, deterioration in teacher – student relations, students' control over teachers, students' disrespect against teachers, teachers' increasing care about the words they use, teachers' negative attitude against the complaining students, teachers' care and prudence against students, teachers' concerns, students' view of teachers as technicians, teachers' feeling of loss of freedom, and teacher's loss of confidence in students. This was expressed by the participants enrolled in the study as follows:

Q55: "ALO 147 application transformed the student – teacher relation into something reserved and septic, and also affected the integrity and sincerity of the relations. This is the milieu the Ministry intended for. Developing a lack of confidence among the constituents of education (teacher – parent – student, etc.) with regard to individual and social events and reaction against thereto..."

Q25: "The students became more impertinent by trusting in this application, and happened to see themselves in a higher position than that of teachers. It provoked the disrespectful behaviors of students toward teachers.

Q54: "I don't feel myself free anymore. I consider myself trapped, someone who is pressed into a certain matrix, who cannot think freely, who just comes and goes the class in order not to be at odds with parents and administration, and who cannot express one's own thought in order to seem sweet to students."

G8, one of the teachers, who had been complained about via ALO 147 line and subjected to investigation, said that ;

The child who spoke this issue (complaint) with her father seemed so timid. She thought I was going to take an attitude against her. I went to her, named her and said that you are still one of my beloved students; I want you to raise hands in the class, I want you to talk... Then she re-approached to me.

G4: "Students had written on small pieces of paper that they didn't want the teacher, and gave the same to the principal."

Some of the teachers that were involved in the study said their relations with students remained intact. In an attempt to explain the reason of the foregoing they said;

"My students were totally unaware. We didn't talk about it" (G1);

“My students were unaware; I didn’t talk about it for the students might have been affected. If the child, who did that, was present, he would reveal oneself. I don’t know if I would react accordingly. Our relations with students continue as it was”.
(G2)

The Effect of ALO 147 Application of Relation of Teachers with Parents

A great majority of the participants involved in the study stated that ALO 147 line affected their relations with the parents. The changes began to emerge in the relations of teachers with parents including communication problem with parents, teachers’ fall out of favor of parents, parents’ control over teachers, parents’ peremptory behaviors, uneasiness of teachers in their relations with parents, deterioration of relationship between teachers and parents, avoidance of teachers from parents, teachers’ feeling about being under threat, and teachers’ distrust in parents. This situation was evidenced by the expressions of teachers as follows:

Q23: “(...) would decrease communication with parents. Parents would not listen to teachers anymore, and instead file complaints directly via the line. Adversely affects the parent – teacher meetings.”

Q79: “Parents were more respectful and trustful toward teachers before. After ALO 147 application, it began to lack confidence. They started to make complaints about almost everything without meeting with the teachers.”

Q90: “The parents choose to make a complaint rather than solving some problems by talking. This may result in lack of communication and prejudices between parents – students and teachers. In practice the application was occasionally used beyond its purpose1.

Some of the participants enrolled in the study expressed that the line did not affect their relationship with parents. The expressions referring to the foregoing are as: Q42: “It doesn’t have any effect. I am not in close relations with parents due to my subject matter.” Q69: “(...) I always cared for my relations with parents. I always empathized.” Q88: “I don’t have any problems with parents as soon as I am good with students.”

The Effect of ALO 147 Call Line on In-Class Practice of Teachers

Majority of teachers expressed that ALO 147 line affected the in-class applications of teachers. The teachers reported controversies regarding having difficulties in grading students, having uneasiness regarding lecturing and solving in-class problems, restricting oneself in in-class behaviors, decreased motivation, experiencing fear and lack of confidence in class, lecturing under stress, feeling under pressure, emerging disciplinary problems, weakening authority over students, insincerity in relations with students, adversely affected course flow, establishing rules based on student satisfaction, distancing from students, lack of confidence in students, being timid during class, being forced to unscientific education application, and sense of being discredited. The statements of some of the teachers, who are subjected to investigation and expressed their emotions and thoughts regarding thereto are as follows:

Naturally your motivation decreases, you can't help thinking that you haven't deserved that, thinking about what you can do about it; you try to pick yourself up. Why me? You ask to yourself... Why they made a complaint about me? (G2).

I was demoralized when I was instructing; it eventually reflects on your face. This is offending someone who duly does one's job. This shouldn't have been done. (G3).

I couldn't take that class (the class during when the complaint was filed) again. I didn't want to. (G4).

After that day, I am writing on the board, I don't care if students copy it or not. I used to teach songs, now I only write on the board; I have given up such things. I told the principal that I wouldn't lecture in that class again. They took the class out of me. I am depressed, my morale is zero (G5).

Of course it makes you artificial. Rather than being natural and fast, you add two more sentences so that the children do not misunderstand it. As a matter of fact the children don't understand it either. It harms our naturalness (G6).

Only a few teachers enrolled in the study reported that ALO-147 call line did not affect their in-class practice. Such teachers are generally those who were not complained about ALO-147 line or those who didn't have a colleague that was not complained about and those who think they duly perform their profession.

The Subjects of Complaints against Teachers as Filed to ALO 147 Call Line

In response to the question regarding ALO 147 application (Do you know any complaint? If yes, what is the subject of the complaint?), the teachers mentioned different subjects of complaints. These included publication, fee, charging money for OSYM registrations, loud sound at ceremony, adopting scientific and critical education approach, assigning a lot of homework, politics, clothing applications, smoking, failure to enter student grades, asking questions in the examination on topics that were not covered, insulting students, failure to report results of examinations on time, discriminating students, developing self-care skills of students, giving low grades, shouting at and threatening students, personal problems, violence against students, union membership, participating in Gezi events, shared activism photos via Internet, in-class attitudes, participating in strike, applying class management, and slanders (false complaints). For instance, a complaint was filed via ALO 147 against a teacher who resorted to class management by instructing a student to sit in the back rows due to her acts disrupting the flow of the course.

A colleague instructs the student to sit in the back row because she talks too much and disrupts the flow of course. However, the teacher was warned and asked to act carefully. That colleague tries to express oneself but the controversy is subjected to investigation, upon which he is fined to verbal reprimand on the grounds of discrimination... (Q67).

Another reason for teachers complained about via ALO 147 was that the teacher was a member of union and participated in union activities. The statement of Q49 regarding the subject of complaint is as follows:

A parent complained about our teacher friend, arguing that he was participating in protests because he was a member of union, and he organized children. Our teacher friend said that he participated in protests by free will not only for his own children but also for all children and for our future. Nothing happened. Yet our teacher friend felt very upset and offended. His relations must have been affected as well.

A similar example as reported by a teacher, who conveyed the experience of a colleague, who was subjected to investigation due to union protest, was as follows: “Our colleague, who supported a strike as decided by our union, was complained by a parent, and immediately inspectors were assigned to our school” (Q60).

Some of the participants asserted that the complaints filed about them via ALO-147 were in fact false and that they were slandered. Q47 shared her/his experience regarding the foregoing as follows:

Despite the fact that I didn't participate in Gezi events last year, I was slandered. I was subject to investigation. My morale and enthusiasm so seriously harmed. I am unhappy to serve a society that does not trust in and appreciate me... All the testimonies of the school were taken (for the sake of an anonymous complaint).

Another teacher enrolled in the study revealed the complaint about himself and the result thereof as follows:

A teacher was slandered via this way. The complaint was examined by inspectors; he was subject to an investigation. As a result thereof the teacher was found non-guilty. Yet it is impossible to repair the perception of the environment or to reinstate it. The teacher lost his enthusiasm; even there have been changes in his view of the society (Q53).

One of the complaints via ALO 147line was based on the claim that the teacher shared a photograph of a protest out of school, in which the teacher participated through social networking site. Q90 stated in regard thereof: “A teacher friend was subjected to investigation upon complaint by a parent to ALO 147, due to protest photographs in a social networking site.”

Another subject of complaint encountered in ALO 147 application is that teacher sends the student to her or his parents due to the lack of self-care of students. Q50 shared experience as an example thereof as follows:

A student of mine soiled her clothes; it was hard to detect by smelling. I sent my student home during playtime in such a way that I never offended, or deflated her. However the mother complained. Despite the fact that I was right, I was asked to be more attentive.

One of the subjects of complaints via ALO 147 is about the private life of teacher. Q11, shared experience with regard thereto as follows:

In my previous school, a complaint was filed against a teacher based on private life through this line (147). The principal asked me questions about that teacher. I think it is not pleasant. I don't think it is right to intervene in the private life of people to that extent.

Complaining about the situations pertaining to the private life of teachers along with subjects related to educational service, and opening an investigation against the teacher, after the complaint was deemed a duly complaint can be considered an intervention in the private life of the teacher and violation and control of the rights and liberties of the teacher.

The teachers' approach towards parents about believing in superstitions, which affect certain sections of the society, was also one of the pretexts for complaining via ALO 147. For instance, Q40 said about his experience that

There was a rumor afloat that the end of world would come in 2013. The parent did not send the student to school in expectation of the doomsday. The other day I said it was absurd, and that it should not affect the education and training of the children. And I was immediately complained about via ALO 147. You can understand how absurd the system is.

Another pretext for complaining about teachers via ALO 147 line is that teachers claimed to have dealt with politics at school. G7 expressed his experience with regard thereto as follows:

[The parent that filed a complaint against me] visits the workplaces of other parents and tries to provoke them telling that I am an Alawi, a Leftist, and an Eğitim-Sen Member. Some parents reject it. I heard it from students. I have no problem with any other parent's child, but Imam complains about me, both via ALO 147, and via town directorate: The teacher is disrespectful against religion, insults religious values, deals with politics in class... .

Another subject of complaint filed against teachers via ALO 147 was the adaptation difficulties and associated problems arisen from schooling at an earlier age as provided by the law known as 4+4+4 in the public. G4, one of the interviewed teachers expressed his experience with regard thereto as follows:

I was teaching the 5.5 (five and half) age group last year. It is because of the 4+4+4 system... Out of five 1st grade classes in the school, one of them was allocated to the 5.5 age group, and a class of 20 students was formed. The enrolling was kept at 20 in order to ensure that the children are not bullied by other children and taken better care of, but this was perceived as a nursery class by parents, something in between... In other words they asked me to have them play only, or I would do this, or I would do that... When the children could not adapt themselves, the parents formed a group against me. When I said the child was not ready for the school, it was perceived as if we didn't want such students and we wanted to send them back. The parent directly complained considering that as if the child was imperfective. The first investigation was based on the claim that I gave a phone call to the parent and continuously harassed her, and wanted them to take the child out of school, telling them that the child was not ready... One week after the completion of investigation the parent came and apologized. She said yes, my child was not ready and taken her out of school. Still I remained to have subjected to an investigation. The second time, similarly, the child used to come to school crying since the beginning of the year, or that the mother used to forcibly leave the child. The child was crying for 6 hours, yet the mother didn't accept it. When I checked the parent contact information, I noticed that father was schizophrenic and the mother's psychology was affected by that. When I reported this situation to the school administration, I was blamed for failing to establish communication with the parent. Subsequently, the parent was offered to change the class, and another teacher took over the child. Then the parent attempts to record a video, which results in a quarrel with the teacher, and subsequently gendarmerie are invited to school. Three school

administrators, 10 gendarmerie officers tried to establish communication with the parent, which I was blamed of failing to make a connection. Then I had to leave before the end of first semester, and they received a report and redirected the child to the nursery class. And therefore, I remained with being subjected to another investigation again. I was subjected to a second investigation based on the claims that I didn't allow the child into the school and the school administration advances on the parent via an anonymous telephone. I was subjected to a second investigation. The investigator, who had to come a second time found me righteous and the investigation was closed.

Like the stories, the teacher, G4, have told, may be experienced by many other teacher, but not with the lucky end. In some cases, teachers and families can face with more tragically conclusion. ALO 147 line can only be an instrument to starting investigation against to teachers.

Conclusion

The documents obtained from the Ministry of National Education suggested that ALO 147 line was used largely for information purposes, however, almost all of the teachers considered ALO 147 call line as a channel by which they could be or had already been complained about. The fact that the “discontents with teacher” was on the top of the list of complaints subtitle within the documents pertaining to ALO 147, supports the concerns and thoughts of the teachers in that respect.

The MoNE ALO 147 call line was implemented via a central decision and in a patronizing way without collecting the views, and ensuring the participation of educators, who are the subjects of education. The educators were informed about ALO 147 call line via informal ways such as media and conversations at school, but not via an official declaration. In the sense thereof, the unions also failed to provide educators with sufficient information.

The complaints against teachers were most probably made by parents and students.

The subjects of complaints against teachers made via ALO 147 line included in-class practice, critical and questioning education approaches, union activities, private lives, beliefs, religious sect., ideological view of teachers, and social protests in which the teacher takes place resorting to her or his democratic rights.

The ALO 147 application adversely affects the relations of the majority of teachers with their colleagues, parents, and students (concern, loss of confidence, limited communication, threat perception, and timidity etc.).

Majority of teachers think that the ALO 147 call line was established to control teachers, force them to obey, and establish pressure and hegemony over them. The teachers also see the call line as a tool to discredit the teaching profession.

The ALO 147 application causes teachers to experience senses of loss of professional confidence, fear, concern, unhappiness, uneasiness, distrust, and anger.

Teachers emphasize that the ALO 147 call line restrict them in in-class practices, and accordingly force them to act like technicians and diverge from scientific and critical approaches.

The ALO 147 call line not only fails to provide a solution for a variety of problems that are experienced in the educational environment and that can be resolved by face-to-face communication, but also creates novel problems between the subjects of education.

Recommendations

The ALO 147 call line should be abandoned on the grounds that it creates loss of confidence and suspicion among the teachers, students, and parents, i.e. the most important subjects of education, used as a tool of control, discredits the teachers, and forces them to obey.

The educators' unions should inform all the educators about this application which damages the teaching education and exhibit massive resistance against such applications by creating a spirit of professional solidarity.

Problems arising from the approaches by students, teachers, and parents towards education and training should be resolved by the reinforcing and liberating "inter subjective dialogue," and not by a call line, which 'dehumanizes' communication.

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