



## **Challenges in School Inspection for Effective Delivery of Quality Primary Education in Tropical African Countries.**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the specific and peculiar challenges school inspectors face in the Tropical African Countries. Tropical African Countries not only share the same climatic, cultural, political and ethnic challenges but equally face the same Primary school inspection challenges. This paper has attempted to highlight them and has shown their effect on the quality of education provided in Primary schools. It has also attempted to show the way forward if quality Primary education will be realized in Tropical African countries.

### **Introduction**

A Primary School is the stage of learning between Early Childhood Development (ECD) stages and junior secondary schools. In some countries junior secondary has been dropped, such that after primary the next stage in the learning of the child is Secondary school. Usually, Primary school going is at the age of 6years and probably ends at 13 years of age. During this time a child is expected to be prepared well enough to attain the knowledge and experience that will be based on for secondary school teaching. All this can be done effectively and efficiently, if the school inspectors do their part of classroom instructional and over all school management control to ensure that everyone in the primary school plays the part expected to be done.

### **Purpose of Inspections:**

Basically, primary school inspection may have various reasons for conducting it. The general purpose is usually to ensure that primary schools adhere to the set National standards and in particular ensuring that the previous school inspection recommendations that were made have been implemented or else the purpose of that former inspection is defeated. It may be a requirement that

an investigation is to be conducted to establish facts about allegations made about an issue in a given school. Furthermore, school inspection may be instituted for purposes of confirming a teacher in service or for purposes of ensuring that a given teacher is fit for promotion. The purposes of primary school inspection are undertaken differently in each country across the tropics of Africa.

- While in Britain, the major purpose of inspection is “to collect a range of evidence, match it against a statutory set of criteria, arrive at judgments and make the judgment known to the public” In Scotland cites the following three reasons are for conducting school inspection.
  - a) Report on the effectiveness of education in schools and other educational institutions and to recommend action for improvement;
  - b) Evaluate the arrangements for assuring quality in schools; and
  - c) Provide frank and objective advice to the higher education authorities and to ensure that educational initiatives are implemented effectively (Mmbado, 2015).

In Uganda, Primary school inspection being managed at two levels thus at National and district levels entails school inspectors at National level to monitor what those at district level are doing. Through this kind of monitoring inspectors at district level are continually supported as they

perform their duties. District inspectors ensure quality classroom instruction and effective and efficient primary school management as per set national management indicators (ESA, 2003).

In Tanzania the purpose of inspection is to ensure that the Primary school complies with the provisions of the Education Act and to ascertain whether that school is being properly and efficiently managed (Mmbado, 2015).

South Sudan despite being a new nation has clearly set the reasons for conducting Primary school inspections. While the National school inspectors monitor what is done in the states and at county levels with the aim of providing support supervision to them but also to continually building capacity in them to perform according to set guidelines, they also set inspection guidelines, train the state and county inspectors for implementation of the guidelines and oversee the implementation strategies. However, the Primary school inspectors at state and county level in South Sudan as mandated by the local Government Act to make inspection plans and to carry out Primary school inspections. However, as they report, they send copies of their reports to the National Ministry of Education for policy development and implementation (Stromme Foundations, 2018). The National Government receives the reports for purposes of generating a general School inspection policy from which the state governments borrow a working framework (Stromme, 2018).

In Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa, where the Federal System of government is very active, State or Regional Governments have total responsibility over their Primary Education Systems. Here Primary School Inspection is conducted in line with the local needs of the State or Regional Government. In such kind of practice where end of cycle examinations are State or regionally controlled, higher institutions' entry requirements are

different from state to state or region to region, the purposes of school inspections are equally different and follow the regional social and economic development plans (Olele, 1995)

In Burundi, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia and a few other countries where state governments or decentralization has not taken strong root, the centre plans for school inspection and the method of operation and reporting is directly from the grass root to the centre. The central government develops the same primary school inspection strategy and has the responsibility to collate the National inspection report and the inspection recommendations are dealt with at National level (Mmbado, 2015).

Therefore, overall, inspection is concerned, in the main, with the improvement of standards and quality of education and should be an integral part of a school improvement programs. The rational for this improvement is to ensure effectiveness in the education system as a key influence on the economic well-being of every nation through implementing cabinet decisions on Primary education. It is also to equip pupils with the kind of education that will enable them to contribute to the increasingly complex and changing society as stated in each Nation's Development Vision (Nyenje, 2017)

### **Overview of the Challenges facing Primary School Inspectorates across Tropical Africa**

Inspectors lack a unifying body across Tropical Africa. If such body existed may be through their annual conferences they would have a common voice and appeal over the challenges they face as they do their work. Not even regional countries have regional school inspectors' bodies to address at least challenges facing school inspectors in that smaller region. Therefore, school inspectors face inspection challenges alone in their small nations and do not seek for help from anyone neither do they make lessons from any other inspector beyond the boundaries of their countries. Interestingly, inspectors from Uganda never share with their colleagues next door in Kenya. This would add value to their work since school inspection lacks professional training and orientation which causes them to perform so badly that inspection is conceived by the school administration and the general public as a control mechanism rather than a means of improving outcomes (Mmbado, 2015).

Inspection is an irregular practice in all of the Tropical African countries for diverse reasons. Such reasons include the scarcity of Human and Financial resources that are some of the main challenges making the inspector to school ratio very high. There is also less division of labor in primary schools such that the inspectors need to perform multiple responsibilities in addition to classroom instruction and school management supervision strategies. Besides that, the inspection tools are so poorly equipped that they only point out the aspects that are directly related to the learning achievement of pupils, the other aspects like teacher –teacher or teacher –pupil relationship, for example are ignored (Gay,1981).

The concept of inspection is being emerged in a number of ways due to contextual reasons. While the Primary School Inspection system in South Africa has been considered a negative practice by teachers and other stakeholders, the institution of Associate Assessors model in Uganda, the self-assessment and the peer-to-peer inspection systems being developed in Ethiopia and Uganda are a point of resurrection of the inspection system that has been collapsing due to lack of sufficient manpower, financial resources and

motivation. There is the increasing number of unrecognized schools. The aftermath of the fragile school inspection system is that the government does not know about the real number of unregistered schools. This failure disables most Tropical African Countries to effectively plan for school inspection that would lead to quality assurance. This means that there are no effective strategies so far taken to control these schools (Gay,1981).

In the same way there is lack of coordination. Since the inspection of primary schools is managed by two different authorities thus the school inspectors (SI) and the education officers (EOs). There is often lack of supervision and coordination. As a result, education officers who would take action on field reports by school inspectors or monitor school inspection end up participating in inspection work. Here the supervisory and monitoring roles are not played by anyone yet they confuse the inspection teams, (Achayo, 2001). To a great extent school inspection is challenged by the great extent corruption interferes. Corruption in the form of negligence of duties, bribe-taking from the teachers and schools is also evident in most Tropical African Countries (Achayo, 2001). School inspection is not only operated to monitor the performance of schools, but also to consider schools for becoming grant-aided, operating boarding facilities or promotion from one level to another. Evidence shows that corruption in the form of exchanging bribes is often being practiced in this process. For instance, inspectors have lied about students' enrolments, standards of boarding sections, school license numbers and school registration status itself (Dunford, 1993, MOES, 2015). The legal requirements of having certain infrastructures, for instance, a library, in schools, emergency exists on dormitories, appropriate latrine/toilet facilities and recreational facilities, for example, seem to be merely inspirational as little or no focus is given on these aspects during the inspection. Sometimes, the teachers, who do not regularly attend schools to take classes, bribe their monitoring inspectors and supervisors. They even fill in the evaluation forms by themselves that are supposed to be done by the inspectors (Gay, 1981). Looking at the way school inspectors report on the performance of the school management committees, it is doubted whether they have the capacity to evaluate on the performance of the SMCs or its corruption diverting their performance power.

Inspectors' hands tend to be twisted at times just to demonstrate that they lack real power. Since the key decisions of SMCs are in the hands of uneducated or at times well-connected people who are mostly local politicians (MOES, 2015, Hargreaves, 1995) the inspectors can rarely take any actions about any irregularities. The political influence on the Managing Committee's decision has been seen in cases where strong politicians like area members of parliament (MP) assault teachers and instead of the MP being brought to book it's the teacher who is unwillingly transferred from the constituency, (Earley,1998).

In South Africa, Nigeria, DRC and other heavily federated countries, each state has a different management system for inspecting schools. What may be applicable in one region may not be the preference in another state. In some states an inspector has power to execute duties and in another the inspector is a mere data collector and reporter. In some states a district is divided into zones and each zone is managed by an inspector of schools (IS) The head teachers/principals report to the IS about the academic and administrative affairs of schools without the IS visiting them on the ground (Herges, 2002).

Failure for school inspectors to generate timely inspection reports is another challenge affecting the inspection system. No inspection report sent to the higher authority neither are the reports even kept for maintaining statistical records (Herges, 2002). Teachers also allege that schools are not frequently visited as

it is required by the formal guidelines. Teachers are often only inspected when any of the head teachers apply for 'Best Teacher/School Award'. Teachers also assume that the power of inspectors is so limited that they cannot take any disciplinary actions immediately against schools, but just warn or advise (Herges, 2002).

Inspection recommendations are not duly taken into consideration and never implemented putting schools into a cycle of producing ineffective results. Only 28.5% of the recommendations in Tanzania, for example, given to schools were implemented (Katunzi, 1978). The study of Mmbando, (2015) similarly found that the quality of the reports submitted by the inspectors was very substandard and inadequate to address the actual problems related to the students' learning improvement and school attendance.

Although there have been requirements for a long time to have each Primary school inspected at least twice a year, the arrangement has severely been hindered due to several reasons like resource inadequacy and the lack of capacity. The lack of human resources is one of the main obstacles for the ineffective inspection of primary schools across the Tropics in Africa. A recent news article showed for example that there are 303 school inspectors in Uganda (MoES, 2015) for inspecting 25,000 primary schools and Early Childhood Development Learning Centers. According to an estimation of MoES, (2015), each inspector would have been responsible for inspecting on average 20 primary schools a term. Furthermore, insignificant budget allocation is another factor responsible for the poor inspection status. For example, Primary school Inspectors who are each in charge of visiting 800 schools in a year in Uganda are provided with only \$270 to accomplish this job which is very inadequate (Sembirige, 2009, Aguti, 2015). The inspector-school ratio in Uganda is 1: 90 which is far above the international recommendation of 1: 40 (MoES, 2015). A Kampala based radio station reported that, according to the Ministry, every school inspector is supposed to invest 40 days in inspecting schools per term. But, Kabarole district that had 6 inspectors in the whole district (2 inspectors in each of the 3 counties) had to inspect more than 400 schools, which is nearly double the total number of schools, inspectors are supposed to inspect (Kabalore FM Radio, 2016).

The overall quality of inspection in Uganda which is representative of a Tropical Country declined from 76% in 2009 to 69% in 2009 (Achayo, 2001). Similarly, in 2008, 54% of the posts in the Education Standard Agency (ESA) were vacant that resulted in the poor inspection process even leading to a worsening situation due to the recent increasing enrolment rate especially in primary schools (MoES, 2015).

The cost of inspection is more than the total budget allocated to ESA and the district local government inspectorates are worst hit. Sometimes, inspectors only visit schools when there is a budget allocated for it (Un, 2012). A radio station's report of 2016 explored that in Uganda only 225 schools were visited out of 709 schools in Luweero district due to the lack of enough resources (Capital Radio, 2016). All the agony inspectors face in Tropical African countries is climaxed by the poor infrastructures such as roads and the poor transportation facilities hinder the regular inspection process. Although inspectors sometimes have bicycles in many parts of Ethiopia, this is cumbersome given the nature of the terrain. In other parts of Tropical Africa like Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania although motor cycles are provided, senior inspectors do not use it thinking of their social status to ride a motorcycle as an official (Aguti, 2015). Inspectors therefore blame administration for poor facilities to reach schools in hard to reach areas. For instance, "Gerald Tusiime, a school inspector in Karugutu Sub County in Uganda says the district should take blame for the

inadequate school inspection. Tusiime explains that some of the inspectors are attached to schools located in hard to reach areas and yet they are poorly facilitated" (Aguti, 2015).

As a result of poor facilitation to inspectors to travel to places of work in most Tropical African countries, teacher absenteeism is increasing and school quality is degrading day by day. Although head teachers are supposed to do performance appraisal of the teachers and submit it to the Education officers, it never happens because of a limited number of inspections (Ibid, 2014). Parents also allege that because of the lack of inspection, teachers involve in their private businesses during the class period (Kabalore FM Radio, 2014).

In almost all Tropical African Countries inspectors perform multiple duties due to the poor division of labor. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) illustrates that in Uganda, "inspectors are often (e.g. three out of five working days a week) are assigned to other administrative functions, including, among other things, registration of schools, handling reports, planning and attending workshops." Therefore, there is little time left for inspecting schools given the amount of workload inspectors have (Aguti, 2015).

There is also the inefficient inspection system. Teachers assume that the inspection system is itself equipped with poor instruction. Besides, inspectors do not have the capacity to address the problems in a constructive way. According to a school director, "inspection does not help much because the inspectors do not have the capacity to diagnose the illness. According to the process, schools are supposed to receive school improvement plans, but her school has never received a plan after any inspections" (Hergreaves, 1995). On top of that, inspectors do not also provide constructive feedback to the teachers and schools (Sembirige, 2009 in Katunzi, 1978).

In a study by Kiggundu (2009) school inspectors in Uganda behave in a threatening and stressful way to the teachers. Inspectors never get back to schools with follow-up inspections and do not provide any recommendations for teachers' professional development. Hence, teachers and head teachers view inspection as a negative practice that does not have significant impact on the improvement of the teaching profession as a whole. Teachers also allege that inspectors sometimes do not visit schools even if they are invited to do so (Aguti, 2015). Over the years, school inspectors have also had general negative attitude towards school inspections and have lacked positive approach to inspection. The general negativity towards inspections may be attributed to the lack of appropriate incentives associated with inspectorial roles. There seems to be a lack of recognition for inspectorial role by the higher Government authorities. Because of apparent lack of incentives, there is lack of commitment and initiatives on the part of school inspectorial role which has further led to the inspectors performing inadequately. Inspectors feel they have been marginalized when it comes to increase of salaries, opportunities for promotion and further training.

Currently, courses specifically regarding school inspection after an Inspector is appointed are haphazard and not sustained. Similarly, in-service training opportunities for school inspection are lacking and inadequate due to financial constraint. In this case training for inspectors to keep themselves abreast of developments in education, to improve their professional skills, and to enjoy the respect and esteem of the teaching profession are highly lacking. It is worth noting that where and when school inspectors are untrained, they are unable to monitor and to evaluate Educational programs effectively. There is need for a thorough in-service training of inspectors in the principles and techniques of objective supervision and evaluation and in procedures of fostering self-evaluation

by teachers. In-service training is important in creating awareness on the part of inspectors and teachers regarding their inspection roles. Similarly the training and development of the school inspectors on a systematic basis is critical so that they are able to meet affectively the new challenges of education and shoulder with confidence the new responsibilities they are required to perform in a reforming education system (Olulube, 2013).

The Government should endeavor to facilitate inspectors' study visits to other countries on exchange programs to enable them acquire additional knowledge about inspection. There is also an urgent need for Universities and teachers' colleges to involve in pre-service training of teachers to include courses on principles and of supervision and inspection as a component of their training programs for aspiring teachers to enlighten them about school inspection. Through training and professional approach to the job, inspectors of schools can provide leadership and serve as agents of change (Oduro, 2008).

Opportunities for collaboration through meaningful dialogue between teachers and inspectors especially after inspection are highly limited because school inspectors have tended to evaluate teachers based mainly, on their own perceptions of teachers' performance. Teacher involvement in matters regarding school inspection has been very minimal. Inspection should be taken positively by all parties involved. It should not be regarded as policing the school management or the teachers. Teachers should be made part and parcel of inspectoral activities (Oduro, 2008).

There is the challenge of inspection being a control measure than a service provided for improvement. The present inspection system is control-oriented rather than service-oriented and tends to focus on maintaining status quo by regulating institution functions and by ensuring that bureaucratic rules and regulations are adhered to. There is therefore, need to identify, to define and to have consistent and appropriate focus or key features or performance indicators like student achievements in the local and National examination, quality of teaching and learning; school contexts, such as motto, vision ,and development plan and targets; Other focus should target Parental concerns and involvement in school development School enrolment, school data and indicators; School's efficiency i.e., the standards of financial planning and management; Pupils' personal development and behavior; the curriculum; accommodation; Staffing; Instructional resources; Planning and organization of school functions and Assessment in classrooms (Sembirige,2009).

School inspectors, who are expected to be experienced teachers, should be more involved in direct observation of classes to enable them make judgments about the quality of teaching and learning based on the evidence they collect in the schools. This has not happened and where classroom observations have been made, it has not been possible for inspectors to identify areas for constructive investigation; provide a basis for measuring the performance of the class against a set of defined criteria and to facilitate decisions regarding strengths and shortcomings in the school's performance. (Sembirige, 2009)

In most Tropical African countries Primary School Inspectorate lacks Autonomy to execute its services and, consequently; it is unable to implement recommendations based on inspection. What school inspectors do is to inspect schools, point out mistakes, make recommendations, and pass them

on to the school Management Committees, district Education Managers and Regional Education Offices for implementation (Uwezo, 2015).

School inspection practices in other parts of the world, other than Tropical Africa, have been marked by yearly planning in some cases, plans for inspection of schools have been ambitious and, consequently, they are seldom carried out. Similarly, there is an ongoing debate on whether schools should be informed prior to an inspection or this should remain impromptu. Inspection would be more interesting if they made annual costed work plans; Work programs; Transport arrangements; made known their types of inspection; made clear their purposes of inspection; inspector roles; and debriefing meetings (Olele, 1995).

The major benefits of pre- inspection preparation, especially by schools are to provide the school with an opportunity to engage in the review process .It enables the inspection to be based on the evidence provided by the school; and it puts teachers on their toes to prepare adequately for inspectors' visits. The preparation process of inspection has the potential of bringing the whole staff together and also improves the school and certain aspects of their work. This preparation happens with the aid of inspectors which is not taking place in most Tropical African Countries (ESA, 2003).

Productive feedback and follow-up initiatives relative to inspection are lacking in the education system in most Tropical Countries of Africa. Opportunities for follow-up regarding recommendations based on the inspection indicators are badly lacking. Furthermore, because of lack of follow-up, there is no way of ensuring that inspection will contribute to school development in a cost- effective way. Mandatorily, there is need to facilitate appropriate follow-up after inspection of schools to ensure that schools implement suggested changes for improvement. This follow-up should be undertaken within a specified period of time to determine the extent to which the recommendations are implemented. Further to this, the inspectorate should endeavor to establish appropriate post-inspection action plans which should be tabled with key stakeholders in the management of the schools. Once an Inspection is over, the school needs management support to move forward. Inspectors are the best people for further advice rather than someone coming in from outside. Currently Tropical African School Inspectors are not doing enough towards this achievement (ESA, 2003).

Most Inspectoral services in Tropical Africa are highly bureaucratic with a top-down, hierarchical, character. Inspectors on the ground sometimes cannot take decisions on matters regarding inspection of schools before consulting the higher authorities who may have little or no knowledge about the situation on the ground. This and other challenges related to management have implications in the delivery of quality basic education. It is obvious that decision making lapse would necessarily occur, where the inspector would wait for clearance from above while the manager makes such decisions at the site (Gay,1981).

Although there stipulated policies in most Tropical African Countries for identifying suitable candidates to be recruited as school inspectors based on education levels, teaching experience and track record, there is evidence from the field that despite the clear policy, unsuitable personnel find



their way into the inspectorate. Often, teachers complain that some inspectors seem to be highly incompetent and are unable to apply desired practices of school inspection and to distinguish between effective and ineffective schools (Mmbado, 2015).

### **Conclusions and Way Forward.**

In conclusion, there are numerous challenges in the practice of school inspection in Tropical African countries today. Of particular importance is the fact that school inspectors themselves are poorly supported and trained. The reports they produce are rarely used in planning by State, Regional or District local governments and therefore do not contribute to quality improvements. The more serious issue is that the schools have numerous challenges of which the inspectors have no solution because of their level of training, experience and efficiency. The challenges above need to be addressed if Tropical Africa is to celebrate over quality education now and in the future to come.

The admission and recruitment of Primary school inspectors should be revised by each Tropical African country. At least someone with a Primary school bias or training should be given an opportunity to work as a school inspector before any other is thought about. If all others in an inspection team are lacking primary education training, then the only one with that training should be made the team leader to guide all others especially on curriculum interpretation and professional ethics.

The conduct of school inspection has to continuously be monitored with focus on the conduct of school inspection and the quality of its reports;

Tropical African countries should cease to put little emphasis on primary school inspection. They should begin realizing that if they are to build for the future primary education is the way and it will be improved only through effective and efficient school inspection. Additionally, all the stakeholders should regard the Primary school inspection system as an important means to improve the efficiency of the system of education; as an instrument for realizing the goals of education development and as a tool of supervision. Therefore they should facilitate Primary school inspection including facilitating consultation with the key stakeholders on matters regarding quality assurance; They should keep education quality and their specific quality culture at the top of their educational agendas.

Tropical African countries need to reduce the impasse associated with bureaucratic procedures in the current practice of implementing inspection recommendations which result into non implementation. Therefore, a rethink of management arrangements for the inspection of schools is needed urgently so that the quantity and quality of inspection meets the respective National educational needs and standards. There should be cost- effectiveness in the inspection practices and procedures. The change must be systematic and far reaching; and the new approaches must be characterized by an attempt to deal with the myriad problems comprehensively. In other words if monitoring is to provide a positive input into improving the quality of education assessment of challenges needs to be turned into advice for improvement.

Successful initiatives will depend on an endeavor to involve all the key players at different levels of thinking through how inspection practices can be adapted to local circumstances and situations. When all the key stakeholders are participants in the inspection process, there is likelihood of facilitating quality and accountability.

### **Policy Implications**

Tropical African countries must rethink out their policies regarding Primary school inspection. Ministries in charge of education may in the future think of giving away inspection services to independent Ministries for better service delivery. However the developed policies need to be directed towards frequency of inspection, appointment procedures for Primary school inspectors, induction programmes for inspectors, and provisions for incentives and rewards for the inspectors. Funding the inspectorate should be a major concern and utilizing the products of inspections with regard to identified deficiencies of the schools would be of great benefit

### **Practice**

Quality assurance should seek explicitly to evaluate the link between the schools' development strategies and the outcomes achieved. There is need on the part of the Inspectorate to strengthen the existing mechanisms of ensuring educational quality, for example through ensuring that learning resources in operation are relevant, comprehensive, and are put into effective use; facilitating sharing of positive trends across schools and encouraging inspectors to be open, critical and to be able to keep abreast with the changes taking place in the field of education to- day, e.g.: being familiar with all aspects of curriculum design, planning, evaluation, review and use of ICT (Mmbado,2015).

Similarly, we need to encourage inspectors to be able to learn from teachers to comprehend the circumstances under which a given school operates and to give the necessary advice; encourage inspectors to be positive in their approaches to school inspection by accepting positive opinions from teachers; and encouraging parents to continue to provide the necessary physical facilities in Primary educational institutions through organized fund-raising meetings (Mmbado, 2015).

### **Roles and responsibilities of all levels (National, Regional, District)**

The principle of sharing power between the central governments in Tropical Africa is a very healthy practice. It allows the lower governments to plan education according to their local needs. It enables local governments to cherish their own culture and promote it through primary education. Therefore, this opportunity extended by the central government should not be abused when the local governments fail to take up their roles in promoting primary school inspection that will make them realize their dreams. There should not be any interference in primary school inspection powers by any big shot in the local government. Similarly, the central government should not overshadow the lower governments in executing their duties or in the allocation of funds.

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