

Barriers to Effective School Inspection in Pakistan and Way Forward

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Abstract: School inspection is the most observed and the least understood phenomenon in the academic world. Improvement in teaching and learning largely depends on quality inspection. Even the quality of the whole school academic programme is linked to inspection process. The process of school inspection in Pakistani schools is ineffective and is considered to be more a dictation than an improvement. There are some deep rooted assumptions concerning the concept of school inspection in Pakistan. It is based on dictation rather than remediation. This paper critically reviewed relevant literature to examine hurdles in the way of effective school inspection in Pakistan. The study found following to be some of the hurdles like lack of follow up, negative attitude of inspectors, political influence, workload, isolationist approach, poor planning and bureaucratic underpinnings.

Key words: School inspection % Barriers% Way forward

INTRODUCTION

Inspection is carried out to improve the process of education. Its main aim is to raise standards and enhance quality of teaching and learning. It is also called supervision and monitoring. Maw [1] views inspection as a process to monitor the standards, quality and efficiency of the schools. Through inspection the goals of the system of education are achieved. Glegg and Billington [2] add that the major purpose of inspection is to collect data through the process of supervision to improve the process of teaching and learning in the schools. On the basis of this decisions are taken to improve the system. McGlynn and Stalker [3] stated that inspection in schools is carried out for three reasons. Firstly, collect data about the effectiveness of education in schools and present solutions for problems. Secondly, evaluate the quality of the available arrangements and to provide suggestions for improvements. Thirdly, it provides simple and effective advice and feedback to the policy makers, school leaders so that the educational initiatives are implemented effectively. Inspection is valuable to review the position of the school and helping it improve its academic and administrative standards. This

shows that inspection is essential to enhance the quality of education. It is the integral part of the overall school improvement program. In view of Hargreaves [4] this can be brought about by three ways such as Firstly, the right of every child to have access to quality education according to his/her needs and aptitudes must be accepted. Secondly, it must be realized that there is close relationship between quality education and economic wellbeing of a nation. Last but not the least, it must be ensured that every child is provided with such an education through which he or she would be able to contribute in an effective manner to his or her fast changing globalised and a complex society.

Mathews and Smith [5] found that inspection is carried out to perform the following functions, for example to inspect performance of individual, to monitor the arrangements to ensure quality through a well placed Audit system, to provide reliable and objective feedback and advice for system improvement and to ensure efficient implementation of the initiatives. Inspection is a powerful tool to monitor education system. It ensures that work is being done according to the desirable standards. It also highlights some of the failures and successes associated with the functioning of the education system

[4]. Inspection is a mode of monitoring education. Wilcox and Gray [6] found that inspection brings the following major benefits to schools. 1). It provides an opportunity to the inspectors to collect first hand information by visiting schools and developing closer relationship with teachers and head teachers. 2). The inspectors will be able to know the problems of the schools, teaching and learning process by discussing these issues with the teachers and head teachers which will enable them to provide real solutions to the problems facing the schools. 3). A relationship of trust will develop between the inspectors and the school. 4). It will be a potential learning experience for the inspectors. 5). It will have a positive impact upon the image of the school in the community and especially in the minds of the parents whose children are enrolled in such schools. 6). It will boost up the school staff morale as well. 7). It will lead to better understanding of schools.

Through inspection various aspects of the schools for improvement can be identified and attention can be given to them to improve them. The inspection reports can be used to inform policy formulation, practicum improvement and school development at large. On the basis of the guidelines generated by the inspection process, government policies can be guided on school development planning and even the national evaluation of the education. School inspection is the most observed and the least understood phenomenon in the world. There are many assumptions affiliated with this particular belief [7]. Isanda [8] investigated that the following common assumptions affiliated with school inspection, like both effective and cost effective method for school improvement, recommendations for improvement, Inspection of schools will not be effective until the recommendations are implemented effectively, gap of relationship and roles between the high education authorities and the school teachers and pupils.

School Inspection in Pakistan: Pakistan as a developing country has been facing deeper crisis of school inspection over the years. This situation is connected to many factors which directly emanate from the practice of inspection. For example, school inspection in Pakistan has been rhetorically more discussed than practically implemented [9]. The concept of school inspection is an integral part of the education system in the country. Hence, school inspection is carried by people at various levels known as supervisors. These levels are divided into elementary, secondary and higher tiers. Each level or tier

has its own supervisors or inspectors [10]. In Pakistani education system the concept of inspection is defined by the supervisory role played by education officers working in different levels at stationed at education offices in districts. The teachers are directly observed by these officers either personally or data is sought through the head teachers of the schools and decision is taken regarding their role improvement or other related purposes [11]. To achieve this aim, the school supervision is carried out to improve quality of teaching and learning in schools. The Government of Pakistan Education policy [12] in this regard provides for the role of supervisors in curriculum improvement and teachers training as well to strengthen through quality inspections and training programs in schools. To achieve this implementation process has been expedited through decentralization of powers [13].

Habib [14] argued that the inspection model in Pakistan is rooted in the colonial era. It has inherited its system of education from the colonial period. This traditional concept of inspection was based on an autocratic approach where the officers would work like masters and teachers servant. This attitude created a vast mistrust between the system of inspection and the school personnel. As Pakistani education system has been greatly influenced by the British system of education, hence, the current practices of inspection still mirrors the imprints of the old colonial system of Her Majesty's Inspectorate based on the concept of ruler and servant [15].

The word inspection means overseeing. Broadly speaking, it involves directing, controlling, reporting and commanding to assess the extent to which a particular task is being performed or objectives achieved within the stipulated period of time [16]. Looking from Pakistani perspective inspection is an autocratic management of schools by inspectors known as education officers, superintendants or supervisors. These inspectors check the work of other low rank workers to ensure that only bureaucratic regulations and procedures are being strictly followed or not. The hallmark of inspection hence is "loyalty to the higher authorities" rather than performance improvement [17]. The role of school inspection in Pakistan as viewed by Illahi [18] has been to catch lower ranking teaching employees red-handed with weaknesses or faults and showing a harsh treatment in form of transfers to remote areas or even termination from services. This has been noticed by Malik [19] to be a highly fault-finding attitude in management or in another

word a one-time activity with no follow ups or targets and guidelines for improvement. This process has been continued with no halt since the establishment till now.

From these views it can be gauged that inspection in Pakistan completely overlooks the professional interest of school inspection and the needs of the teaching staff. It also neglects the goals of true education as envisaged in the constitution of Pakistan 1997, that education system shall work on the principles of democracy, professionalism and equality. Inspection process conducted in this way may not be effective in achieving the goals of quality education and in improving the process of teaching and learning in schools [20].

Objectives of School Inspection in Pakistan : According to the Farooq [21] in Pakistan school inspection is carried out to obtain the following objectives, enhance quality of education by ensuring an all-round development of the educational institutions, to explore problems and issues in the schools and provide solutions, to plan strategies for better improvement in teaching and learning in schools, to identify discipline problems in schools and to remedy the situation, to monitor teaching and learning in schools and provide professional guidance for improvement, effective curriculum implementation [14, 22].

For achieving the above mentioned objective, the government has chalked out a comprehensive policy at the provincial and district levels. Through devolution of powers to the Executive District Officers to provide immediate help and guidance to the school personnel through frequent school visits [23]. This purpose of inspection in view of Hashmi [24] may be effective in long run if it is accompanied by the following measures, like, Democratic attitude of inspectors during school visits, agreed inspection plans at national, provincial and district levels, effective implementation of the inspection programs, Post inspection follow ups, sustainability of corrective actions and less political interference.

The Major Challenges: On the basis of review of existing literature the following were identified as the major challenges in the way of effective school inspection in Pakistan.

The School Inspectors: School inspectors in Pakistan are those officials who inspect educational institution such as pre-school, secondary, college of public or private [25]. The inspectors are responsible identify and provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of school personnel. The inspectors are known as education

officers, superintendants, supervisors and head teachers so on. The basic aim of inspection is to improve the quality of education. Mohanty [26] inspectors are that a supervisory staff who arranges some visitations to schools to check educational facilities, monitor, review, assess the standards maintained by teachers and provide professional guidance. Unfortunately, over the years, the role of school inspectors in Pakistan has been very subjective and dictatorial.

The Degree of Professionalism: The general behavior of school inspectors toward teachers to be autocratic. This unprofessional conduct has left serious implications for the teaching and learning process in schools [27]. This situation has been described by Qureshi [28] as private cold war between teachers and the inspectors. Due to this attitude inspectors in many parts of the world have been criticized by teachers, community and even students [29, 30]. In one of his study Mwanzia [31] found that many inspectors have demand bribes from teachers for favorable reports, show very harsh behavior and work with arrogance. In such situation in view of Kamuyu [29] some inspectors behave like outsiders who want to show the teachers as incompetent. Masara [32] supports that some inspectors visit schools to show themselves as big boss and just to harass the teachers rather than helping them solve issues and problems of teaching and learning. This unprofessional behavior of the inspectors in the words of Rehman [33] has led to many serious and negative consequences such as; poor teacher and inspector relationship, lack of trust of teachers on inspectors, fear of unknown in the minds of teachers after inspection and lack of teacher support for the system of inspection.

Fault Finding: Now-e-days, although, the traditional concept of school inspection has changed yet still in some countries of the world inspectors show policemen attitude towards teachers looking for faults and putting fear in the minds of the teachers [32]. This has given birth to anxiety among the teaching personnel and resultantly they are found less able to perform their duties well. In view of Gray and Gardener [34] this type of attitude has created such a situation where teachers and head teachers are thrown into panic whenever the name inspector is taken in front of them. In a study, Mohanty [35] almost 60% of the school teachers consider inspectors as danger to their work. Similarly, a survey by Dean [36] in United Kingdom showed that teachers and head teachers felt threatened by inspection. Through this study it was

found that the attitude of the inspectors was intimidating and unfriendly. Thomas [37] observed that in Canada inspectors are taken as a source of trouble and fear by teachers when they visit schools.

Negative Attitude: Olembo *et. al.*, [38] has observed that inspectors show negative attitude towards inspection and some inspectors are found less dedicated to inspectoral duties. Kamotho [39] this is attributed to lack of appropriate incentives, lack of recognition. This situation has further led to poor performance of inspectors.

Lack of Follow-up: Pakistani school inspection lack proper follow ups. Teachers do not receive any support for improvement as a result of inspection. Recommendations after conducting follow ups are highly limited and equal to zero [40]. This situation has created a sense of alienation among teachers regarding the system of inspection. Therefore, it is generally believed that inspection will contribute to school development in a more cost- effective manner. This is not the only case in Pakistan [41]. There are examples from around the world. For example, in one such study Dean [36] discovered that in England inspectors did not give feedback to teachers after conducting inspection. Instead the teachers reported that they were disturbed instead whenever any inspector left the classroom after inspection without saying anything.

Isolationist Approach: Instead of close cooperation between the teacher and the inspector it is found that inspector evaluate teachers on the basis of their own perceptions rather than the real grounds of needs for inspection. This has created a rift in the teacher community and inspectorate circles. There is less and even no chance of collaboration between the teachers and inspectors [42]. According to Riffat [25] generally the teachers are not aware of the evaluation tool which gives rise to apprehensions in the minds of the teachers about the practices of inspectors. Some inspectors are not able to communicate effectively with teachers.

Political Influence: The process of inspection is not free from various influences. One of such influence is political in nature which is deeply ingrained in the educational system of Pakistan. The process of implementation is replete with mistakes and slow actions due to which there is a lack of proper autonomy [43].

Poor Planning: School inspection in Pakistan is characterized by poor planning. There is no concept of successive planning. Either the plans are over ambitious or are not implemented in its true spirit. There have been some irregular visits just to catch teacher's mistakes and prove them wrong [44].

Bureaucratic Underpinnings: The Pakistani schools inspection system is highly bureaucratic in nature. There has been always a top down approach with a clear authoritarian character. This approach has impeded the smooth process of inspection one such problem is that of communication. Inspectors are not free to take any decision before consulting the higher bureaucracy who may have no or less knowledge of the ground situation on matters which need immediate attention of the inspectors [45]. To solve the issues of immediate concern a new system called establishment cadre has been instituted after separating the teaching cadre from it. At district level this cadre is directly answerable to the Executive District Officer Education for their role and responsibilities. In this cadre lower rank inspectors (Assistant District Officer) have been assigned areas with a number of schools in each areas. The ADOs are required to present a comprehensive report of the schools falling under his or her jurisdiction to the EDOs office [13].

On the basis of this report directives and necessary actions are taken by the concerned office regarding the improvement of the teaching and learning process in the schools. This practice has been lauded by many yet from some quarters stills there some reservations raised regarding the working relationship of the inspectors and even the process of selection. For example as Shah [41] observed that due to the political interference in the selection process unsuitable personnel find their ways in to the inspectorate and put the integrity of the system into danger. Some inspectors seem to be incompetent to apply desirable practices of school and fail to distinguish between effective an ineffective schools. Therefore, in the words of Habib [14] there should be a proper training mechanism for these inspectors before ending them to the schools for the inspection purpose.

Issues and Challenges Faced by School Inspectors: Although much hype was created when the new inspectorate system with ADOs were instituted in Pakistan, yet, the current system of inspection is greatly endangered by the following issues [17].

Issue of Inadequacy: It has been observed that currently in Pakistan school inspections are highly inadequate. It does not meet the needs of the schools. Teachers, parents and students are not satisfied with this development. There are less school visits and very few classroom observations. This problem has been attributed to understaffing, workloads and time constraints. Furthermore, the ministry of education seems less serious to take notice of these developments at the district level which has exacerbated the problems faced by the schools [46].

More Schools Insufficient Inspectors: The ratio of schools as compare to the inspectors is very less. It has been found by Illahi [18] that there is a single ADO (inspector) for more than hundred schools. In some areas even this facility is not available. At the same time it has been found that in more places the number of schools outdistances the capacity of the existing schools in different areas. This issue is due to the alarmingly increasing rate of enrollments in public schools.

Supervisory Load: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) [47] found that schools inspectors in Pakistan face heavy workloads which affect the quality of their inspection duties. Inspectors are given other duties at the district education office (inspectorate) that engages them in duties other than inspection. This tendency on the part of the higher authorities has created gap between the schools and the inspectors.

Transport Issue: In Pakistan education system is the most neglected system. It is less funded and less resourced. In a critical study of inspection processes has found that there are no single visits of ADOs to the concerned schools in a year. This situation has created concerns in the circles of the community. It was found that the main reason for this was lack of transport facilities. The concerned school inspectors are not provided by transport which renders them incapable of visiting far flung areas for school inspection and in bad weather conditions this becomes almost an impossible task for the inspectors to find ways to the schools [19, 43].

Resource Availability: Effective school inspection in Pakistan is affected by the availability of resources such as internet, equipments, stationery and so on. Shah [41]

stated that the school staff is frustrated due to the lack of essential facilities and funds. There is no accommodation facility in the field which in some cases compels the staff to seek shelter in the community which drastically affects their professional self-esteem. It has also been observed by Hashmi [24] that there are perennial shortages of stationery and computers which make it difficult for the inspectors to prepare meaningful reports.

Evaluation of Inspection: There is a general lack appropriate post-inspection evaluation. It has been found that inspection reports are not properly evaluated for taking necessary actions to remedy the situations prevailing in schools [14]. These reports are either kept in the office without any action taken upon them or neglected. This trend has created concerns of school teachers, head teachers and the parents regarding the effectiveness of the inspection process. In a study Farooq [21] has explored that many schools in different parts of the country do not receive any effective feedback after inspection by the concerned education officers. This trend can create further trust deficit between schools and the system of inspection.

Current Problems in School Inspection: This study after a deep investigation into the current literature has identified the following main problems needs immediate attention in the process of school inspection in Pakistan that is, lack of commitment and professionalism in inspectors, lack of cooperation and collaboration between inspectors and schools, lack training for school inspectors, lack of professional freedom due to frequent political interference, lack of strategic planning, lack of rigorous implementation of inspection processes, bureaucratic underpinnings, lack merit-based selection, lack of resources, lack of transportations and lack of quality inspection evaluations [43, 41].

Opportunities Ahead: This study presents the following strategies to deal with the problems of inspection system in Pakistani education system, such as, provision of on-going professional training to the school inspectors, removal of authoritarian approach towards inspection, provision of professional freedom to the inspectors, facilitation of appropriate follow up, providing transport facilities, undertaking of inspection through effective planning, provision of necessary resources, ensuring

nepotism and favoritism free selection process, lessening of bureaucratic red-tapism and quality evaluation and feedback [14].

Potential Benefits of the Proposed Improvement Strategies:

The school inspection improvement strategies as identified by this study will bring the following benefits both to the system of inspection and the schools including, functions of the current system of inspection in Pakistan will improve, Inspection reports will help in providing valid information for the policy makers and authorities to take solid actions for the improvement of teaching and learning process in schools, distance between schools and inspection system will decrease, quality inspectors will be employed, Political and bureaucratic interference and prolongation of remedial actions will be rectified, atmosphere of trust will develop between all stakeholders: parents, students, teachers and inspectors [24, 40].

CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that there are many weaknesses in the practices of school inspection in different countries education especially in Pakistan. The most deep rooted is the poor training of the officers which has led to the unfortunate unprofessional attitude towards the process of inspection itself. The process of inspection is still based on the traditional Master-Servant approach with no provision of feedback and guidance to the school personnel after the inspection. This has created a sense of alienation between the school personnel and the inspectorial staff. The school inspectors are politically selected and bureaucratically imprisoned. Hence, they cannot work in freedom. Their work is subjected to the dictation of the political personalities. This practice has crippled the real inspection to take place. The present system has been given a ray of hope to be improved by separating the teaching and administrative cadres. However, the system could be made more functional through healthy funding and resource mobilization. In this regard the inspectors could be facilitated by providing them with transport and other facilities to enable them to work efficiently. A complete rethinking at this stage is needed so that the quality of school inspection should meet the national and international standards. The system of inspection could be improved if it is made free from political influence and

the professional autonomy of the inspectors is maintained. The implementation process is the back bone of the system. Hence, the results of the inspection could be achieved if the process of implementation is allowed to take place without any halt.

Future Research: A thorough research study on other aspects of this concept could lead to more comprehensive results. For this purpose future researcher should explore the current practice and procedures of school inspection system in Pakistan.

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