



SCHOOL INSPECTION EFFICACY AND MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NAKASONGOLA DISTRICT - THE CASE OF NAKASONGOLA TOWN COUNCIL AND WABINYONYI SUB-COUNTY, UGANDA

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Abstract:

The study focused on school inspection and managerial effectiveness in government-aided primary schools in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council in Nakasongola district, Uganda. Two study objectives guided the study thus; (i) To assess the efficacy of school inspection in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council (ii) To examine the influence of school inspection on school effectiveness in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council. A descriptive study design using a mixed-methods approach was employed. The study population comprised of headteachers and teachers from the 19 government-aided primary schools in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council plus the inspectors of schools at the district headquarters. The study sample included 19 headteachers, 154 teachers and 2 school inspectors. The school inspectors and headteachers were selected purposively while the teachers were selected using a simple random technique. To collect quantitative data, closed-ended questionnaires were administered to teachers. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interview guides were employed to collect data from headteachers and school inspectors respectively. Quantitative data were presented using descriptive statistics while content and thematic analysis techniques were used to analyse qualitative data. Results revealed that inspection efficacy was rated to be good in some quality indicators as evidenced by the ability of the inspectors to assess the appropriateness of teaching/learning, the effective assessment of teacher preparedness and planning, and the effective assessment of reports on the quality of school facilities. The inadequacies in school inspection included inspectors' lack of in-depth knowledge of specific subjects and the inability by the inspectors to mentor headteachers in leadership. The study also revealed that school inspection had a significant influence on school effectiveness and this was manifested in the improvement in the teaching and learning process,

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improvement in the level of teacher preparedness/planning and improvement in the utilization of school resources.

Keywords: psychological factors, predisposing lateness, school

1. Introduction

School inspection refers to a purposeful visit to an educational institution to provide an independent and external evaluation of the quality of education being provided (MoES, 2010). In Uganda, this important activity acts as an independent control mechanism in the education system that evaluates schools' inputs, processes and activities and outcomes with the intent to establish the extent of conformity to established standards (NPA, 2018). During the British Protectorate Government in Uganda, the missionaries introduced the system of inspecting schools in the late 19th century to promote compliance with the colonial education standards. After independence, there were reforms in school inspection and two offices were introduced –the office of the Chief Education Officer and that of the Chief Inspector of Schools. These two offices were charged with the responsibility of overseeing the overall school administration and school supervision and inspection respectively (GoU, 1970). The inspection function was managed from the centre with staff deployed at regional and district levels.

In 1989, the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) under the leadership of Professor Senteza Kajubi recommended the shift from the colonial system and operational modality. The EPRC recommendations culminated in the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) of 1992. The GWPE recommended that inspectorate be made autonomous or semi-autonomous to make it more effective in quality assurance of the education system of Uganda (GoU, 1992). So, in 2001 the Education Standards Agency (ESA) was established in consonance with the recommendations of the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) and a few years later in 2008, ESA was transformed into the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) as per the revised Education Act of 2008 (GoU, 2008). However, in the Local Government Act of 1997 and the Education Act of 2008, the inspection function at the primary school level was devolved to local governments (GoU, 1997; GoU, 2008). Furthermore, internal evaluation (self-assessment) as an alternative mode of evaluating the quality of education in schools also forms a strong basis for schools to develop improvement plans (MoES, 2010).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Efficacy of School Inspection

School inspection is viewed as one of the overarching practices that are crucial in enhancing effective and efficient educational processes in school. It is a professional practice which encompasses the measurement, testing and evaluation of activities in

schools with the aim of improving the quality of education programmes offered (Ololube, 2014). In various education settings, school inspection is conducted by independent agencies or semi-autonomous organs.

In Uganda, school inspectors perform an investigative role in the activities of schools –they assess the quality and standards of teaching/learning, they also find out how well the institutions are being managed and they also assess the overall achievement of learners (MoES, 2010). While performing their duties, inspectors also follow standards or basic expectations which are set to determine the parameters used to measure the actual practice. In the process, they also employ quality indicators to evaluate how well the schools are doing and how much they have to go to provide the required quality of education. According to MoES (2012), there are 18 quality indicators in school inspection thus; (i) quality of teachers’ planning (ii) quality use of classroom resources (iii) quality of teaching and learning (iv) assessment, recording and reporting (v) teachers’ knowledge (vi) learners’ understanding and attainment (vii) school leadership (viii) financial management (ix) supervision of teaching (x) staff deployment and development (xi) management of co-curricular activities (xii) access and equity (xiii) climate and relationship within the school (xiv) school governance (xv) community relations (xvi) sanitation, health and nutrition (xvii) school safety and security. These 18 quality indicators, act as a compass that guides the activities of school inspectors.

2.2 Influence of Inspection on School Effectiveness

School inspection is aimed at making teachers and management more committed to the task of delivering quality education to the citizens and improving the standard of teachers’ professionalism (Vanhoof & Van Petegen, 2007). In relation to accountability, school inspection leads to a judgment which may have corrective consequences or rewards for the school itself. In addition to this accountability perspective, growing evidence indicates that school inspection can be a crucial factor in a school improvement process as the identification of a school’s strengths and weaknesses can be viewed as a lever for developing educational quality (Penninckx, Vanhoof De Meyer & Van Petegem, 2016; Van Bruggen, 2010). Despite this ambition, research indicates that school inspections only encourage effective school improvement under specific conditions (Ehren, Perryman & Shackleton, 2014). However, despite its undisputable contribution to improving the quality of education, educators tend to see school inspection as an external imposition (Wanzare, 2002).

It is also postulated that school inspection creates a condition where those given the mandate of raising standards in education could account for their responsibilities (Wilcox, 2000; Lee & Wong, 2002). For teachers and school management to effectively perform their roles in delivering quality education, sufficient and efficient mechanisms of school inspection have to be put in place (Kaweesi, 2012). By conducting school inspections, governments are able to meet the challenges of globalization by creating a competitive workforce (Neave, 1987; Wilcox, 2000). It is also argued that the purpose of

school inspection is to guarantee that schools meet the legal requirements of the state to ensure the legitimacy of the received financial support (Ehren & Honingh). On the other hand, some studies reveal that the impact of school inspection on teaching is limited (Ehren & Visscher, 2006) due to its continuous failure to have a positive impact on classroom practice (Webb, Vulliamy, Hakkinen & Hamalainen, 1998).

In the same vein, it is opined that inspection process is not only threatening and stressful to teachers but also judgmental in nature because district inspectors also lack constructive feedback mechanisms to improve teacher practice – this scenario presents a distorted picture regarding the effectiveness of school inspection and its contribution towards school effectiveness (Sembirige, 2002). The ineffective approach to school inspection appears to be frustrating the government's efforts in ensuring that Ugandan children get access to quality education. Recent research shows that there are a number of tailbacks to the current inspection practice that seems to be impeding its credibility among educators – key among these hindrances is the use of unfriendly and outdated inspection techniques which seem to be doing little to improve classroom and headteacher practices and school management. Hopkins, Harris, Wathing & Beresford (1999) contend that the improvement of schools through inspection has been a subject of research to justify the investment of funds in the process.

However, there are concerns that school inspection has not been achieving its goal of supporting schools in improving educational quality (Macharia & Kiruma, 2014). And indeed, no study has so far been conducted in Nakasongola district to validate this claim. The focus of this study, therefore, is to establish the efficacy of school inspection and its influence on school effectiveness in government-aided primary schools in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town council in Nakasongola district, Central Uganda.

2.3 Research Objectives

- 1) To assess the efficacy of school inspection in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council, Nakasongola District.
- 2) To examine the influence of school inspection on School Effectiveness in Wabinyonyi sub-county and Nakasongola Town Council, Nakasongola District.

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive study design using a mixed-methods approach. This is because descriptive research aims at casting light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables the description of the situation more complete than would be possible without employing this method (Fox & Bayat, 2007). The population for the study comprised of 19 Public Primary Schools (PPS); that is, 14 in Wabinyonyi sub-county and 5 in Nakasongola Town Council. The respondents included 2 school inspectors, 19 headteachers and 150 teachers. School inspectors and headteachers were purposively selected because of their centrality in the school inspection process

while the teachers were selected using a simple random sampling technique. To collect quantitative data, a closed-ended questionnaire was administered to teachers which they filled at their convenient time. Qualitative data was collected using interview guides, Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs), observation checklist and document review guides. Quantitative data analysis was done by editing, coding and processing using SPSS version 19 to generate descriptive statistics. Furthermore, to derive absolute meaning from qualitative data, the study employed content and thematic analysis techniques.

4. Findings

Table 1: Efficacy of School Inspection

No.	Statements	Level of Agreement/Disagreement			
		SDA	D	A	SA
1	Inspectors effectively assess the appropriateness of teaching/learning processes in schools	47%	20%	24%	09%
2	Inspectors effectively assess teachers' knowledge of the subject and guide on how to teach them	40%	11%	19%	30%
3	Inspectors effectively assess teacher preparedness and planning	20%	20%	20%	40%
4	Inspectors effectively assess the quality of the school curriculum	21%	15%	14%	50%
5	Inspectors effectively evaluate the quality of assessment in schools	36%	20%	24%	20%
6	Inspectors effectively assess school leadership and management capacity	37%	20%	23%	20%
7	Inspectors effectively assess the staffing levels in schools	15%	25%	20%	40%
8	Inspectors effectively assess the availability of the appropriate school facilities and resources	20%	17%	33%	30%
9	Inspectors effectively assess the quality of self-assessment in schools	34%	28%	20%	18%

In Table 1 above, respondents were asked to rank the statements related to specific inspection efficacy and the results indicated that the majority (67%) disagreed that inspectors effectively assessed the appropriateness of teaching/learning in schools. For teachers to effectively perform their role of teaching and instruction, there should be a mechanism for evaluating their performance. In this case, the inspectors are supposed to provide the necessary support to the teachers to ensure that the teaching/learning activities are aptly done. However, in an interview with one school inspector at Nakasongola District Local Government, it was revealed: *“that inspectors are not well facilitated to perform their duties as required”*. It was reported that the central government releases inspection funds to the districts only once in a term –and the amount disbursed is only enough for an inspector to make a single visit to each school in a term. It was alarming to learn that in a county like Nakasongola where Nakasongola Town Council and Wabinyonyi sub-county are located, the number of both private and public schools

is well over 80, and it may not be possible for a school inspector to carry out all the necessary inspection activities given the poor facilitation in terms of fuel and the redundancy created by having only one functional vehicle in the department. This concern was also echoed by the headteachers during the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) when one of them decried that *“some schools don't even receive any inspector at all in the whole term. The headteachers further noted that “if school inspectors were well facilitated, it would be possible for them to reach all schools and have adequate time to provide the necessary technical support to teachers”*. To this, Chapman (2001) explains that when inspectors visit schools, they ought to place much focus on teaching, learning and direct observation.

As to whether inspectors effectively assessed teachers' knowledge of the subject, the majority (51%) disagreed and 49% agreed. For inspectors to adequately assess teachers' knowledge of a particular subject, they should have the capacity to do so. This implies that a lot has to be done to build the capacity of school inspectors before they (inspectors) can think about assessing the knowledge depth of teachers. In a FGD with headteachers, it was reported that *“some inspectors have capacity gaps which inhibit them from performing their duties effectively”*. Similarly, results of interviews with school inspectors also reveal similar sentiments and it was suggested that *“government should invest in capacity building interventions where inspectors have to attend a mandatory number of workshops and seminars in a year so as to be equipped with the relevant technical knowledge and skills”* for effective inspection.

Turning to the ability of inspectors to effectively assess teacher preparedness and planning, the majority (60%) agreed and 40% disagreed. It is crucial to admit that for teachers to deliver the lesson content appropriately, they must carry out adequate research on the subject content, make quality schemes of work, arrange the learning environment aptly and prepare suitable lessons to fit the abilities of learners. This can be achieved if the necessary technical and material support is extended to the teachers. The results of FGDs with headteachers strongly appreciated the inspectors for their effort in assessing teacher preparedness. The headteachers reported that the inspectors were always very keen when it came to checking schemes of work and lesson plans. They noted that it was unusual for an inspector to visit a school and leave without asking for teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans.

About inspectors' efficacy at evaluating the quality of assessment in schools (56%) disagreed and 46% agreed. Learning is more effective if learners are properly assessed and evaluated. Therefore, one of the cardinal roles of a school inspector is to ascertain whether quality evaluation and assessment of learners takes place in schools. In one of the interviews with an inspector of schools, it was pointed out that *“in Nakasongola district as a whole, the evaluation and assessment of learners at the school level has not been so effective”*. The inspector argued that as a department, they *“had not done enough to ensure that there was the continuous assessment of learners in schools”*. During FGDs, the headteachers attributed this flaw to the inability of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to implement the Continuous Assessment Model in national examinations. Nonetheless,

Matthew and Matthew (1995) emphasize that inspectors need to assess whether the schools successfully meet their targets in terms of learning outcomes and students' experiences which are the core of quality assurance in schools.

The study also revealed that inspectors did not effectively assess leadership and management capacity in schools – this was revealed by 57% of the respondents who filled the questionnaire. While the quality of leadership and management determines a lot in as far as the performance of schools is concerned, in many instances, it is not accorded the attention that it deserves. On this matter, the inspectors argued that this anomaly was due to the inability of Nakasongola District Local Government to organize seminars and workshops where inspectors could be invited to provide the necessary leadership and management skills to the headteachers and School Management Committee (SMC) members. They also added that *“at the school level, inspectors usually don't get ample time to interact with the leaders”* given the fact that they have many schools to visit.

It was also noted that the majority (64%) of respondents agreed that inspectors effectively assessed the staffing levels in schools. In their routine school visits, inspectors are required to assess the staffing levels of each school and suggest recommendations accordingly. Views from headteachers also showed that the inspectors performed this role satisfactorily. Through FGDs, headteachers explained that on every school visit, inspectors got to know the staffs who were available at school and those who were absent due to various reasons. The inspectors' visits also made it possible for the education department to establish the staffing levels of every school in the district and to suggest possible interventions for schools to get rid of their staffing deficits.

The study showed that inspectors effectively assessed the availability of appropriate facilities in schools –this was revealed by 63% of the respondents. To ensure that schools have the required facilities, there has to be a mechanism for assessing their availability, adequacy and quality. Routine school inspections should be able to address such issues to help the district to plan appropriately. In Nakasongola Town Council and Wabinyonyi sub-county, headteachers' views showed that there was a considerable attempt made by the school inspectors to report on the state of the available facilities in schools. The two inspectors who were interviewed noted that in their inspection tool, there is a provision for tracking the status of facilities in all the schools in the district. It was specifically noted that *“the information is then submitted to the relevant authorities and agencies for purposes of providing the necessary solutions to the existing facility challenges.”*

The majority (68%) of the respondents also indicated that inspectors did not follow up on the aspect of self-assessment in schools. This was attributed to the failure of inspectors to adopt contemporary approaches to quality assurance in schools. Results of FGDs revealed that school inspectors were still stuck to the traditional approaches which did not give any opportunity to schools to assess their strengths and weaknesses. There was still that mentality of believing that *“it is only an inspector who can assess the quality of teaching and learning without empowering and building the capacity of schools to assess their own performance”*. However, a much bolder view suggests that school inspectors should

always report on how schools see themselves, that is whether the teachers feel they are doing the right thing, not just how the inspectors judge the schools (Hargreaves, 2010).

Table 2: Influence of School Inspection on School Effectiveness

No.	Statements	Level of Agreement/Disagreement			
		SDA	DA	A	SDA
1	School inspection helps schools to improve the teaching/learning processes	30%	21%	19%	30%
2	School inspection helps teachers to improve on the knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them	33%	22%	25%	20%
3	School inspection helps to improve teacher preparedness and planning	18%	27%	28%	27%
4	School inspection helps to improve the quality school curriculum	15%	20%	15%	50%
5	The inspection helps to improve the quality of assessment in schools	30%	22%	18%	30%
6	The inspection helps to improve on leadership practices and management capacity in schools	30%	21%	19%	30%
7	The inspection helps to improve on the staffing levels in schools	14%	26%	35%	25%
8	The inspection helps schools to improve on the quality and quantity of their facilities and resources	15%	25%	35%	25%
9	Self-assessment in schools helps in the development of improvement plans	30%	33%	20%	17%

In Table 2 above, respondents were asked to rank statements about the influence of school inspection on school effectiveness and the majority (51%) disagreed while 49% agreed. It was also evident from the FGDs that school inspection did not have any significant influence on school effectiveness due to several inadequacies that were pointed out by the majority of the participants. There was a general belief that inspectors paid little attention to schools which were located in remote locations compared to those which were found in urban settings and along the highway. Nevertheless, school inspectors need to prepare a proactive inspection schedule which should cater for the needs of all schools in the district irrespective of their status and location. In this case, inspectors need to maintain a communication channel which links their professional activities to the existing challenges in schools. To this, Earley (1991) concluded that teachers tend to value inspectors who behave professionally and who act according to the school's purposes and values.

The study also showed that school inspection did not help to improve teachers' knowledge of the subjects of specialization –this was revealed by 55% of the respondents who filled the questionnaires. School inspection needs to be carried out by competent school inspectors who in turn help to build the capacity of teachers in their respective subjects of specialization. However, views of headteachers during FGDs also seem to suggest that inspectors had capacity gaps in different subject areas. There was a general

lack of technical capacity by the inspectors to guide teachers on how to go about with the effective development and delivery of subject content. Nonetheless, Wilcox (2000) explains that inspectors should offer value-added support to schools in order to add meaning to their inspection activities.

As to whether school inspection helped to improve teacher preparedness and planning, the majority (55%) agreed. Improvement in teacher preparedness and planning for effective teaching can be realized if inspectors of schools provide the necessary support to the teachers by giving them the requisite knowledge and skills in content building, scheming and lesson planning. During the FGDs, the headteachers strongly agreed that the inspectors always supported teachers in this aspect. The headteachers explained that whenever the inspectors visited their schools, they would pay enough attention to the teachers' level of preparedness and planning for effective teaching. However, the headteachers further reported that the only problem was the persistent failure by teachers to deliver the content in line with the recommendations in the inspection reports. This was attributed to poor attitude towards work by the teachers hence necessitating attitude change interventions to salvage the situation.

It was also noted that school inspection helped to improve the quality of the school curriculum –this was revealed by 65% of the respondents. Whereas the school curriculum comprises various aspects that range from academics to extra-curricular activities, it is important that these activities are closely monitored and improved from time to time to enhance effective learning in schools. It is one of the duties of school inspectors to ensure that the quality of the curriculum is properly regulated according to the set guidelines enshrined in the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) for schools (GoU 2010). During the FGDs, the headteachers reported that the inspectors placed serious emphasis on equipping teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills in curriculum management. One of the inspectors also revealed that “*after a series of cluster-based seminars and refresher courses,*” there was “*a noticeable improvement*” among teachers in the way they interpreted and understood the curriculum.

As to whether schools inspection helped to improve the quality of assessment in schools, 52% disagreed while 48% agreed. Quality assessment of the pedagogical processes is to a great extent an important undertaking which determines whether there is effective teaching and learning in a particular educational institution. The work of an inspector is to ensure that learners are assessed regularly using standardised approaches. During the FGDs, the headteachers confided that inspectors did not adequately support the teachers to develop effective assessment and evaluation skills. It was reported that the inspectors themselves seemed not to be competent enough to mentor the teachers to adopt and adapt competence-based approaches to learning assessment. This is why it is claimed that encouraging self-assessment and evaluation is extremely important in attaining the goals of a school (MacBeath & Martimore, 2001).

The study also showed that inspection did not help to improve leadership practices and management capacity in schools –this was revealed by 51% of the

respondents. Performance in any given school also depends to a great extent on the quality of its leader. Inspectors are therefore required to mentor school heads to develop effective leadership capabilities through routine capacity-building interactions. Nevertheless, as the results indicate, the inspectors have not done much to develop the headteachers into the type of managers who should transform their schools into centres of excellence. During FGDs majority of the headteachers revealed that the school inspectors did not give enough attention to the provision of mentorship to those that needed it.

In this study, the majority (60%) of respondents agreed that school inspection activities helped to monitor and improve the staffing levels in schools while 40% disagreed. It is noteworthy to recognize that during their routine school inspection activities, inspectors are required to collect data on staffing levels in schools so as to inform top management of the existing gaps that could be hindering effective learning and teaching in schools. The results of FGDs showed that this task was one of those that inspectors conducted extremely well. It was noted that whenever the inspectors visited the schools, they administered a tool which they used to capture staffing levels and other related information which proved to be vital in initiating the recruitment of teachers and headteachers to fill the existing gaps.

The study showed that inspection helped to improve the quality and quantity of school facilities and resources –this was revealed by 60% of the respondents. In this context, school resources refer to all material and non-material possessions of a school which aid the process of teaching and learning. These include things like buildings, furniture, equipment, playgrounds, libraries, laboratories, employees, machinery and funds. So, the inspectors are supposed to ensure that the school resources named above are properly maintained and put to proper use. As the results indicated, the headteachers reported that the inspectors always endeavoured to ensure that school administrators made proper use of the resources. However, one inspector reported that *“some schools had not yet developed an effective culture of maintaining school resources.”* It was important to note that in many cases, school administrators could not undertake minor repairs and renovations especially *“the buildings and playgrounds.”*

The majority of respondents (66%) also revealed that self-assessment as an integral part of school inspection did not help schools to come up with school improvement plans. This was partly due to the fact that self-assessment activities were virtually non-existent in schools. The headteachers noted during FGDs that self-assessment was not part of the routine activities that had to be embedded in their school annual reports –additionally, there were no penalties tagged to it. In an interview with one inspector, it was admitted that *“there was some laxity in implementing self-assessment and as a result, it did not have a serious impact on quality assurance in schools”*.

5. Conclusion

Results on Research Objective 1 showed that there were specific areas where inspection efficacy was generally good –these include; the ability of the inspectors to assess the appropriateness of the teaching/learning process in schools, the effective assessment of teacher preparedness and planning by the inspectors, effective assessment and reporting on staffing levels in schools and appropriate assessment and reporting on the quality and quantity of school facilities. On the other hand, there were some inadequacies that bedeviled inspection efficacy –these include; inspectors’ lack of in-depth knowledge on specific subjects taught by teachers and the inability of the inspectors to mentor headteachers in leadership and management skills.

Results on Research Objective 2 indicated that there were specific cases where inspection activities had a positive influence on the management of schools –these include; improvement in teaching/learning processes in schools, improvement in teacher preparedness and planning for teaching, improvement in the quality of curriculum management, improvement in staffing levels, quality and utilization of school facilities. But there were also cases where school inspection did not have any positive impact on school management –these include; the inability to realize a significant improvement in assessment processes, deplorable level of school leadership and management and; the inability of some teachers to have sufficient knowledge of their subjects of specialization. Lastly, it was also noted that although self-assessment was an integral part of school inspection, it was not prioritized in Nakasongola Town Council and Wabinyonyi sub-county and as a result, it did not have a significant influence on school effectiveness in the two lower local governments.

5.1 Recommendations

On the basis of the above results, the following recommendations are suggested;

- 1) The Government of Uganda should ensure that all persons recruited as school inspectors must have a post-graduate qualification in the assessment and evaluation of educational programmes.
- 2) Local governments should be properly equipped with the necessary facilities and resources to enable school inspectors perform their roles effectively.
- 3) Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for school inspectors should be mandatory.
- 4) Self-assessment should be mandatory in all schools and it has to be one of the items on the national school calendar.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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