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*Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments*

## School Inspection Challenges: Evidence from Six Countries

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## 1. Introduction

School inspection is a quality control mechanism, which exists in almost all countries. This is also considered to be a medium through which education providers can be held accountable for the standards of services and outcomes. However, the purpose of the inspection is not only to ensure accountability, but also to enhance performance of schools according to the education policy goals and purposes (Wilcox, 2000).

This paper analyzes the inspection processes and practices in six developing and emerging countries to hold schools accountable for maintaining input and teaching standards as per the requirements of formal guidelines. The country cases are chosen from diverse geographical locations and income levels according to the World Bank categorization: Bangladesh, India and Cambodia from the lower-middle income category; Uganda and Tanzania from the lower income group; and South Africa from the middle-income category (World Bank, 2017). A secondary qualitative method is applied to carry out this study using academic research literature, reports and website data from governments and international agencies, as well as newspaper articles.

Findings suggest that inspection systems in these countries are facing a number of common challenges that include human and financial resource constraints, lack of willingness of inspectors to regularly visit schools, as well as the lack of their capacity to point out schools' real problems. In addition, there is also a serious gap in communication between the school administration and inspectors. In other words, teachers' negative assumptions towards inspectors as well as inspectors' lack of professional orientation to constructively evaluate the schools impede the functioning of the inspection processes. This, in turn, makes it difficult to serve the actual purpose of inspection to improve school outcomes through strengthening mutual accountability system between schools and the superior administration. Accountability is, instead, seen as also argued by Wilcox (2000) a final product of inspection rather than a means to improve school outcomes.

## 2. Key findings

- Inspection is an irregular practice in all of these six countries for diverse reasons. Scarcity of human and financial resources is one of the main challenges making the inspector to school ratio very high. There is also less division of labor in public institutions. Thus, inspectors need to perform multiple responsibilities in addition to regular school visits.
- Corruption in the forms of negligence of duties, bribe-taking from the teachers and schools is also evident in certain countries.
- The materials for inspection are poorly equipped to point out the aspects that are directly related to the learning achievement of students. Besides, inspectors' lack of professional orientation is a prime cause of perceiving inspection by the school administration as a control mechanism rather than a means of improving outcomes.
- The concept of inspection is being emerged in a number of ways due to contextual reasons. While Inspection system in South Africa has been considered a negative practice from teachers' and other stakeholders' point of view leading to the emergence of internal and external evaluation system, the self-assessment and the peer-to-peer (pilot projects) inspection system in Bangladesh is being installed due to, among other reasons, lack of resources.
- The legal requirements of having certain infrastructures, for instance, a library, in schools seem to be aspirational as little or no focus is given on these aspects during the inspection.

### 3. School inspection: case studies

#### 3.1 Bangladesh

The management of the school inspection system in Bangladesh differs according to the primary and secondary education levels. While primary schools are inspected by the Upazila (sub-district) authority, District and relevant education boards are responsible for the secondary school inspection (Rabbi, 2008). Though there is also an Upazila Secondary Education Office headed by the Upazila Secondary Education Officer, this office is rather responsible for the “monitoring of stipend programmes for girls at secondary and higher secondary levels, academic supervision, and data collection of annual surveys conducted by BANBEIS” (UNESCO, 2007: 5).

However, the Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO) is in charge of 20-30 primary schools in a cluster with the responsibility of regular monitoring and inspection. The AUEO is also responsible for the in-service training of primary teachers of 4-5 schools in a sub-cluster (Rabbi, 2008). Schools are then graded as ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ according to their performance. On the other hand, District Education Office (DEO) is responsible for the secondary school inspection. The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) also inspects school, but for a different purpose, i.e., often for checking the eligibility of receiving grants while DEO inspects the overall performance including financial auditing (De Grauwe & Naidoo, 2004).

#### Implementation challenges

Although there has been an institutional arrangement for a long time to inspect schools, the process is severely being hindered due to several reasons:

**Resources inadequacy and the lack of capacity:** The lack of human resources is one of the main obstacles for the ineffective inspection. A recent news article shows that there are 2,589 Upazila Assistant Education Officers (UAEO) for inspecting 65,000 primary schools and madrasas, 26 for each on average. The officials need to visit each school once in a month, but schools in the remote areas are not sometimes visited even once a year (Bdnews24, 2016).

This situation is even worse in the case of secondary schools. With the current number of human resources, as the Secretary of the education ministry, Nazrul Islam, points out, only 1,700 of the total 36,000 secondary schools can be inspected in a year. Hence, it will take approximately 20 years to regularly monitor each school in one cycle (Dhaka Tribune, 2015). According to an estimation of 2002, each DEO was responsible for inspecting on average 314 schools and madrasas (De Grauwe & Naidoo, 2004). The situation has not improved much since then as shown in the estimation of all schools. During 2015-2016, only 3,647 schools were inspected out of about 36,000 schools by the Directorate of Inspection and Audit (DIA). A total of 2,342 reports were submitted to the DIA. In these reports, nearly 317.95 BDT Million (about 4 million USD) was noticed unauthorized and hence, recommended to return to the respective administration. To be more precise, these inspections only deal with financial auditing (DIA, 2016a).

**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. Thus, no effective strategies have so far been taken to control these schools (Billah, 2016). The statement of SM Wahiduzzaman, Director General of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in a newspaper that, “We didn’t ask guardians to admit their kids to such unapproved educational institutions. It’s their responsibility. Saying this, we’ll definitely consider the matter” also reflects that the government has not been strict about this issue (Rashid, 2016).

However, to tackle the resource constraints, the government has been initiating some alternative solutions. One of them is the decision to initiate ‘peer inspection’ of schools at different levels where the heads of similar local institutions will inspect the performance of each other’s schools (Dhaka Tribune, 2015). Recently, several pilot

projects have been initiated in the selected schools of different districts (DIA, 2016b). Moreover, the self-assessment system has been expanded to the schools throughout the country since 2008 (EMIS, 2016), however, there has been no study to assess if this new accountability mechanism is improving the school outcomes.

Furthermore, insignificant budget allocation is another factor responsible for poor inspection status. For example, the Upazila Primary Education Officers (UPEOs) are in charge of visiting 10 schools in a month. But, they are provided with only 200 Tk (equivalent to 2.5 USD) to accomplish this job which is very inadequate (Islam, 2008).

**Lack of coordination:** As aforementioned, the inspection of primary and secondary schools is managed by two different authorities and often lack coordination. As a result, secondary schools usually receive less inspection than the primary schools since they are inspected by the district authorities (De Grauwe & Naidoo, 2004). Even though there is an office at the Upazila level for managing secondary school affairs, it does not cover the aspects of inspection (UNESCO, 2007).

**Corruption:** School inspection is not only operated to monitor the performance of schools, but also to consider schools for becoming nationalized or fully public. Evidence shows that corruption in the form of exchanging bribes is often being practiced in this process. Recently, 7 high school inspectors in 3 different education boards were found involved in presenting wrong information about the schools in exchange for money. For instance, the responsible inspectors showed student to classroom ratio 50, which is actually 14, to legally register these schools in exchange for a notable amount of bribes. Even fake documents were used to show the land ownership of the schools to be legally registered (Ittefaq, 2016). Similarly, while inspecting four schools in different districts, an inspector of Dinajpur Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board presented wrong information in exchange for 15 lakh taka from each of the schools. The inspector showed student to classroom ratio 51 instead of 15 in real. It's worth mentioning that 40 students are required per class to run a school at secondary level which is 30 at primary level (Sunny, 2016 & MOPME, 2011).

Two case studies of Transparency International show that a bribe of 22,000 and 62,000 BTD needed to be paid to establish a non-government school. The widespread practice of corruption often leads to compromise with the legal requirements of input standards in the schools which we have seen above (Islam, 2008).

**Inefficient inspection:** According to the government law, every private school has to own a library with a minimum of 500 books. However, the inspection form of the DIA to monitor the primary schools does not have a specific section about the library. Nor does the form urge about the medical facilities in the schools, which is also a mandatory requirement for establishing a private school (MOPME, 2011).

Besides, the secondary school visit or inspection system by the District Education Office (DEO) is designed in a way which neither can effectively evaluate the performance of schools nor does give an insight of the schools' functioning (De Grauwe & Naidoo, 2004).

Moreover, there is no effective mechanism to assess the performance of SMCs and teachers (Al Mamun, 2014). Sometimes, the teachers, who do not regularly attend schools and take classes, bribe their monitoring supervisors. They even fill in the evaluation forms by themselves that are supposed to be done by the AUEOs (Chowdhury et al., 2009).

**No real power of inspectors:** Since the key decisions of SMCs are in the hands of uneducated or well-connected people, who are mostly local politicians (MHHDC, 2012) the administrative officials can rarely take any actions about any irregularities. The political influence on the Managing Committee's decision can be seen in a recent event where a high school teacher was assaulted by a Parliament Member (MP). The teacher was also

immediately dismissed from his position. However, later, authority from higher administration took measures to keep the teacher in service after the incident was highly criticized throughout the country (Bdnews24, 2016b).

### 3.2 India

Each state of India has different management system for inspecting schools. Here, the inspection system of two states, Delhi and Kerala, is described:

#### 3.2.1 Delhi State

At the state level, the Director of Education is responsible for the inspection of all recognized schools, both public and private. However, the inspection section is under the supervision of an Additional Director, headed by a Deputy Director of Education (DDE) and assisted by an Assistant Director of Education (ADE). For each district in Delhi (total 13 districts) (DoE, 2016a) there is one Deputy Educational Officer (DEO). Each district is then divided into 2-3 zones and each zone is managed by an Education Officer (EO). The head teachers/principals report to the EOs about the academic and administrative affairs of schools (DoE, 1990 & Joseph, 2012: 6). However, according to the Delhi School Education Rules- 1973 (amended in 1990), every inspecting officer is responsible for inspecting at least 50 schools in a year. Officials ranking above the EOs have to visit no less than 10% schools in the zone (DoE, 1990). Since there are 5,743 schools of all levels, both public and private (NUEPA, 2016), in 28 zones of Delhi (DoE, 2016b), the estimation of this study indicates that each inspector (EO) is allocated with inspecting 205 schools on average. The inspection is conducted in three phases outside the Delhi metropolitan area:

1. *Central level inspection* is carried out when inspection cell of the headquarters asks EOs to inspect any specific schools. Then the school heads are informed about the inspection where several aspects are inspected including “infrastructure, quality of teaching, attendance, fund utilization, broad picture regarding the functioning of various welfare schemes etc.” (ibid, 2012: 6). Head teachers are responsible for any discrepancies in information sent through online forms. The *penalty* could be simple advice, warning or even record in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) that might lead to suspension of the responsible teachers or it might affect future promotion and service benefits (ibid, 2012 & DoE, 1990). The inspection has to be conducted in every school once in a year (Joseph, 2012).
2. *Special inspection* might happen if there is any news of malfunctioning in a school. There is no prescribed form for this type of inspection (ibid, 2012).
3. *Surprise visit* is another type of inspection that can happen anytime by EOs according to their wish or other officials from superior administration such as DDEs in their districts (DoE, 1990 & Joseph, 2012).

The last two types of inspection are supposed to take place more frequently, as high as 3-4 times in a month, in the low-performing schools according to the central public exams (Joseph, 2012).

In addition to the above mentioned processes, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) also conducts inspection before registering a school and in each school once in five years after registration is completed. CISCE also inspects schools that are not inspected by the Department of Education (DoE) in three years (ISID, 2015).

#### Inspection in Delhi Metropolitan area

Unlike the rest of areas in Delhi state, metropolitan city's schools are supervised and inspected by School Inspectors (SIs), who are responsible for 3-4 wards under a zone. There are 12 zones in the municipal area to monitor a total of 1,750 schools (DoE, 2016c). Given that government is responsible for inspecting all recognized schools, be they private or public (DoE, 1990), the estimation of this study shows that each inspector is on

average responsible for inspecting 146 schools. Two types of inspection are usually conducted in the municipal schools:

1. *Annual inspection* is conducted in each school once a year to assess the overall performance of schools. Teachers are also assessed in this inspection and inspectors need to review at least 5% of the students' answer scripts.
2. *Monthly routine visit*: Each SI is responsible to visit all school under her/his once a month without any set date.
3. *Surprise visit* is carried out in at least 10% of the inspected schools by an ADE in every month (Joseph, 2012).

### **Inspection Challenges in Delhi**

**Lack of resources:** Similar to Bangladesh, resource scarcity is one of the main challenges of regular school inspection in India. As aforementioned, on average, each inspector is responsible for inspecting 205 schools in the entire state of Delhi. However, the inspector and school ratio in the metropolitan area is 1: 146. Although the law of 1973 (amended in 1990) requires each inspector to visit at least 50 schools in a year, the real proportion of the actual number of schools to be inspected is four times higher than this requirement.

Moreover, inspectors are also required to perform other administrative tasks, thus, they do not have enough time to regularly visit schools. The less division of labor is the main cause of multiple responsibilities of an actor (Joseph, 2012).

**Inefficient inspection system:** The prescribed form for school inspection in Delhi Metropolitan area does not contain adequate information to inspect the aspects that are directly related to the learning achievement of the students. Out of the total 17 points, only 1 point speaks about monitoring of learning outcomes and teaching quality, or in other words, the matters that can directly impact the learning achievements of students. Therefore, the creativity of inspectors, especially during the monthly routine inspection which is done by the inspector alone, is the main factors to assess the schools. More precisely, the effectiveness of inspection through an insightful visit “depends on the work-ethics of the inspector” (ibid, 2012: 10).

Besides, there are no guidelines from the central authority to conduct the inspection other than what DDE prepares. DDE is the whole responsible person for the management of inspection as the “headquarters just demand the database regarding enrolment, post allocation teacher-pupil ratio, dropout rates twice in an academic year”, but nothing else more than that (ibid, 2012: 11). Additionally, only the recommendations are considered by the DDE and sent to the headquarters for the purpose of fund allocation. No inspection report is, otherwise, sent to the higher authority. The reports are not even kept for maintaining statistical records (ibid, 2012).

**Teachers' views:** Teachers 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 very limited that they cannot take any disciplinary actions immediately against schools, but just warn or advice (ibid, 2012).

### *3.2.2 Kerala State*

Each district (there are 14 districts) of Kerala is divided into many education districts and then educational sub-districts. These sub-districts are headed by the Assistant Educational Officer (AEO) who is responsible for the



school management and inspection. And the principals are mainly responsible to inspect the performance of teachers and provide suggestions on what they should improve (GED, 2010).

District education officer (DEO) (educational district) is in charge of inspecting every school once in a year with the help of a panel of teachers. He/she can also pay surprise visits whenever a complaint of irregularities arises about a school (ibid, 2010). Deputy Director of education (DDE) or the head of a district is required to visit at least 20% of the total schools (Joseph, 2012).

### **Inspection Challenges in Kerala**

**Lack of resources:** In practice, DEOs cannot inspect the large number of schools in a year as they need to perform other administrative tasks. As Joseph's (2012) study shows, for instance, the DEO of Wayanad (an educational district) needs to inspect 76 schools in a year. But, he cannot perform this duty in addition to the other administrative responsibilities. A teacher of Wayanad, therefore, faced inspection only twice in her teaching experience of 16 years. The DEOs sometimes face strong resistance by the teachers' union, which makes them reluctant to inspect schools.

### **Common implementation challenges in both Delhi and Kerala states**

**Aspirational policy with less focus on inspection:** According to the Right to Education (RTI) law-2009 each primary school in India is required to have a library (MLJ, 2009). Similarly, library is a prerequisite to open a secondary school (MHRM, 2014). However, inspection system in both states does not emphasize on this requirement making the legal requirement aspirational like that of Bangladesh. As Joseph's (2012) study shows that during the annual visit of Kerala government schools, no information is sought on library. The surprise visit in Delhi metropolitan schools also does not emphasize on having a library.

**Only private schools are facing Penalties:** Although the inspection system is not effective enough due to the resource scarcity, the private schools have been the main targets of the government in terms of compliance with rules and regulations. Thanks to the initiatives of the government after passing the Right to Education (RTE) act-2009, a huge number of schools are being closed that are mostly private. However, public schools are not facing closure for non-compliance with the laws on maintaining input standards.

A study of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) shows that most of the schools are not complying with the set standards according to the law. The Punjab state government cancelled registration of 1,170 schools out of total 9,300 schools due to non-compliance with the law. The study also points out that 48% of teachers are un-qualified in private schools in Punjab. The schools also do not meet Student-Teacher Ratio and teachers are often underpaid (Dhaliwal, 2015).

An estimation of a news article from 2013 shows that the government intended to close 6,116 private schools in the 6 states including Delhi that provide education to nearly two million children. However, though private schools face closure because of not maintaining standards, public schools are not facing the same situation on the same ground of non-compliance (Miranda, 2013). Rather, private schooling is getting popular as the percentage of 19% in 2006 increased to 29% in 2013, according to The Annual Survey of Education (ASER) report 2014 (Francis, 2014).

On the other hand, government schools are losing service recipients. In 2015, Karnataka shut down 146 government schools because of no service takers. But, it costs huge government resources to build those schools, nearly 10 lakhs (15,521 USD) for a school. "The Delhi government announced last year that it was looking for private players to run 30 of its schools as the schools had no takers" (Rangaraju, 2015). Hence, this closure for non-compliance and ensuring better schooling in turn harms the education sector.



**Lack of effort in registering unregistered schools:** The number of unrecognized schools in India is very significant, which is apparently the result of poor monitoring and inspection system to apply the laws. An estimation of District Information System for Education (DISE) shows that there are 2.63% unrecognized schools at the primary and 1.06% at the secondary level in India. However, this estimation only covers the schools that were included in data collection process, thus, doesn't show the proper scenario (DISE, 2015). The survey of Delhi Metropolitan city-2013, similarly, shows that 1.64 lakh children are in unrecognized schools (Polanki, 2013). Therefore, the existence of these unregistered schools signals two possible directions: i) schools do not get registered because of strict regulations; and ii) the government is emphasizing more on inspecting registered private schools than putting close surveillance on the unregistered ones.

### *3.3 Cambodia*

Education Quality Assurance Department is responsible for the school inspection in Cambodia. Inspectors evaluate schools based on four criteria of head teachers, teachers, students and community members. These include: i) Leadership and management; ii) Teaching and learning; iii) Students' results and achievement; and iv) School self-assessment. Observation of the inspectors is also a part of the inspection process. Inspectors then have to provide a report to the district authority within the two weeks of inspection. In addition to the recommendations to be provided to the schools, a follow-up inspection is supposed to be carried out to see the improvement of the recommendations (MEYS, 2016).

To make the inspection process more effective, education ministry issued a new guideline in 2010 regarding external and internal school inspection to ensure the quality of schooling system (Sopha et al., 2015).

According to the guidelines, district inspectors are required to inspect schools during the exams, before and after the short vacation of whole year, especially to monitor whether schools are regularly open and teachers maintain punctuality while taking classes. The inspectors are also required to coordinate with local stakeholders- village authority, teachers and parents. If any serious irregularities happen, e.g., teachers' absence, inactivity in schools or irregularities in taking classes, schools may face closure as a sanction (ibid, 2015).

Similarly, the education ministry recently decided to introduce surprise visit system in the schools. In 2015, the minister of education outlined this inspection initiative saying that surprise visits "evaluate school management, teaching methods, and student performance" (Khamer Times, 2015).

#### **Implementation challenges**

**Irregular visit:** Although inspectors are required to regularly visit schools during the specific mentioned times, Sopha et al., (2015) finds that only 13% schools were visited once a year and 56% twice a year. Surprisingly, none of the schools under the study was visited before and after the short vacation as required by the guidelines.

Corruption and other irregularities are the huge problems in the education sector of Cambodia. A study of Nissen (2005 in Un, 2012) finds that corruption in the education sector of Cambodia constitutes more than half the total incidents of corruption in country's public sector. The study of Un (2012) shows that inspectors extract money in the form of bribes while inspecting schools.

**Opposing view towards inspection:** The study of Un (2012) further reveals that the school principals think that accountability in the form of control or the current form of school inspection cannot help the effective use of the resources distributed by the government. Schools should be more accountable to the parents or service recipients than the government. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to decide what to spend, what not to.

Although schools are provided with autonomy, the leadership of the schools is still suffering from the lack of adequate knowledge about the management and utilization of funds. The leaders of schools decide to build fancy gates and fences before they have any libraries, adequate classroom infrastructure, laboratories and even sanitation facilities. A school director says that her main project is to build fence though the school does not even have toilets for students (ibid, 2012). Moreover, the government has a mission to equip all schools with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Richardson, 2008). Interestingly, most schools in Cambodia have no electricity to use the ICT equipments (Un, 2012). The lack of monitoring and supervision may be linked to this inefficiency in fund utilization as schools' management committees do not receive enough guidance to manage the school affairs.

### *3.4 Tanzania*

Inspectors of primary schools in Tanzania are the former primary school teachers with at least 8 years of experiences. On the other hand, secondary school inspectors are administered from the zonal level, which is an administrative tier after district. Each school has to be inspected at least once in a year. Every inspector is allocated with 30 schools to inspect. But, because of personnel shortage, a school is visited once in two years. However, majority of the inspectors are employed to inspect primary schools (932 out of 1073). Though the number of schools increased by 300% during the period from 2005-06 to 2006-07, the ratio of inspector has not been increased at the same pace (NAO, 2008).

There are several types of inspection: i) the whole school inspection carried out in every school once a year, ii) the follow-up inspection is carried out in a small number of schools to follow-up the recommendation, and iii) the special inspection is conducted addressing a specific issue (ibid, 2008).

#### **Implementation challenges**

**Inefficient school inspection:** A study of Lupimo (2014) on four schools shows that school inspection in Tanzania does not focus on the academic improvements of students. The performance audit report of the government on secondary schools-2008 similarly explores that, only 12% of the recommendations for the headmasters were related to the poor performance of students and 3% were for dropping out students. Findings from the study of 91 schools, selected from 2900 schools, suggest that the pedagogies and students' performance have not been addressed at all during the inspection. School infrastructures and buildings were the first priority of the inspection. Even in the handbook for inspection, "Specifically targeting issues related to poor performing students" has no priority while only 11% of the items are indirectly related to addressing the issues of poor performing students (NAO, 2008: 22).

Moreover, recommendations upon the inspection are not duly taken into consideration putting schools into a cycle of producing ineffective results. Only 28.5% of the recommendations given for a school were implemented (Lupimo, 2014).

The performance audit report also reveals that the majority of the recommendations are out of the capacity of schools to implement and only the government can handle these recommendations. Sometimes, recommendations are unrealistic, costly and too broad or not specific. After the school inspection is carried out, majority of the recommendations are given for the ministry that are mostly general and comprehensive, such as, schools need to be repaired, rebuilt etc. Even if it is for the head teachers, 70% of the recommendations become very broad, such as, more teachers needed (NAO, 2008).

The study of Mmbando & Hongoke (2010) similarly finds that the quality of the report submitted by the inspectors is very substandard and inadequate to address the actual problems related to the students' learning improvement and school attendance.

**Irregular inspection** is also another challenge to make the inspection system effective. Among the four schools under the study of Lupimo (2014), only one was inspected for once during the period of 2008-2014. The rests were not inspected at all. Besides, in spite of having an increasing amount of budget per school, the frequency of inspection has not improved. During the period of 2008/09, only 9% of total secondary schools were inspected (Uwazi, 2009).

**Teachers' view on inspection as interrogation:** The study of Lupimo (2014) also finds that inspectors use "abusive language and some of the inspectors ask questions that are out of schools' capability" (p. 64). The recommendations the give are also beyond the reach of schools to come into a solution. Hence, 70% of the teachers see it as wastage of time. Moreover, teachers view inspection as a process of interrogation rather than an initiative for improvement.

**Lack of resources** also another reason of inefficient school visit. While taking the sample of seven zones of the country the study of Mmbando & Hongoke (2010) shows that there is a shortage of staffs by 28% and transportation by 29.8%. Thus, only 19.1% of the total primary schools were inspected during the period of July 2009 – June 2010, which is 16.8% for secondary schools.

Inspectors argue that mushrooming of the community schools, lack of human and financial resources- transport problem, very insignificant budget are the main hindrances to regularly inspect a large number of schools. On top of that, lack of authority of the inspectors to penalize schools plays a notable role for irregular school visits (Lupimo, 2014).

Whatever the reasons are, the number of failing students in the national examination of primary education has been gradually increasing reaching 60.7 in 2013 from 10.9 in 2006 (Kambuga and Dadi, 2015).

### *3.5 Uganda*

The Directorate of Education Standard (DES) is responsible for the overall inspection of primary and secondary schools in Uganda. The Head of the Education Department in the District/Municipal councils ensures if the school inspectors carry out their duties accordingly. At the field level, the School Management Committees (SMC) and the Board of Governors (BOG) help inspectors inspect schools. Head teachers are responsible for implementing the recommendations of inspectors. However, inspectors are also supposed to disseminate the good practices in addition to looking at the compliance with standards (OAG, 2010). Several types of inspection are carried out for this purpose (ibid, 2010):

- i) National-full inspection: under this scheme, every school has to be inspected at least once in two years with a full 7-day visit by at least 3 people. Physical facilities, instructional and learning materials, curriculum offered, the quality of teaching and learning process, and the quality of school governance are assessed during this type of inspection.
- ii) Routine/short inspections are the partial inspections. "These normally require specific focus on data gathering instruments. The focus will often be dictated by the need to monitor new policy priorities, for example, Guidance and Counselling. It may also be motivated by a particular area of concern that has been identified. For instance, financial management, sanitation or/and literacy teaching" (ibid, 2010: 18).
- iii) Flying visits is a quick type of inspection, for example, sudden visit of a school because of collapse of a building. Inspectors may take immediate remedial actions during this type of visit.
- iv) And lastly, follow-up inspection happens to monitor whether recommendations of the regular inspections have been implemented within 18 months or not. A copy of report is then given to the schools and a copy to the District Education Officer (DEO).

### **Implementation challenges**

Lack of resources: Similar to above four countries, school inspection in Uganda is also hindered because of the lack of financial and human resources. The inspector-school ratio in Uganda is 1: 90 which is far above the international recommendation of 1: 40 (Un, 2012). A Kampala based radio station reports that, according to the ministry, every school inspector is supposed to invest 40 days in inspecting schools per term. But, Kabarole has 6 inspectors in whole district (2 inspectors in each of 3 counties) to inspect more than 400 schools, which is nearly double of the total number of schools, inspectors are supposed to inspect (Digida Radio, 2016).

The overall number of inspection declined from 76% in 2009 to 69% in 2009 (Talemwa, 2011 in Un, 2012). 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 (OAG, 2010).

Findings of the Education, Science, Technology and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report 2014/15 suggest that, inspectors cannot visit schools due to the lack of sufficient resources (MoES, 2015). The cost of inspection is more than the total budget allocated. Sometimes, inspectors only visit schools when there is a budget allocated for it (Un, 2012). A radio station's report of 2016 explores that only 225 schools were visited out of 709 schools in Luweero district due to the lack of enough resources (Capital Radio, 2016). To combat this inefficiency, government is increasing the number of employees and funds in addition to decentralizing the channeling of funds to stop any financial leakage (Kayabwe, 2014).

Moreover, poor infrastructures such as road and transportation facilities hinder the regular inspection process. Although inspectors sometimes have motorcycle, senior inspectors do not use it thinking of their social status to ride a motorcycle as an official (Kayabwe, 2014). 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 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" (Kajubu, 2015).

As a result, 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 DEO, 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 (Digida Radio, 2014).

Less division of labor: Like India, inspectors in Uganda have to 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) 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 (Kayabwe, 2014: 24).

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" (Un, 2012: 137). On top of that, inspectors do not also provide constructive feedback to the teachers and schools (Sembirige, 2009 in Kiruma, 2013).

Opposing views towards inspectors: The study of Kiruma (2013) on secondary schools of Uganda shows that the way inspectors behave is threatening and stressful 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 (Kajubu, 2015).

### *3.6 South Africa*

According to the Public Service Commission (PSC) Act, 1997, every public institution in South Africa is subject to be inspected upon the demand of the commission for ensuring "the performance of the functions" (RoSA, 1997: 5). The district education office is responsible for the overall school inspection to enhance the quality of services, which is nowadays mostly carried out in the form of evaluation. However, inspection is also conducted from the central level in a selected number of districts and schools in all provinces (PSC, 2016).

The concept of school inspection in South Africa have been deeply influenced by the principle of public service reform initiative such as New Public Management (NPM) principles (Mathaba, 2014), where citizens are considered as customers and the first priority to be effectively served. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS), published in 1995, named "Batho Pele" or "people first", has positively changed the service delivery process of the public agencies (DoPSA, 1997).

However, this policy after the democratic government took power has also transformed the way public institutions are traditionally conceived in general. As a result, inspection system has experienced meaningful changes. Instead of perceiving institutions including schools as a matter of being controlled and rigorously supervised through inspection, the practice of evaluation and assessment have been started through many initiatives. The creation of the School Self Evaluation Instrument is one of those initiatives. The school committee makes a plan every year involving all the relevant stakeholders and evaluates schools through nine set criteria (DBE, 2001).

Moreover, Whole-school Evaluation (WSE) also takes place in schools by the district education offices to assess and monitor the quality of the service delivery system in the schools through "partnership between supervisors, schools and support services at one level, and national and provincial governments at another" (DoE, 2002: 2). This was totally opposite before the democratic regime came into power in 1997. Inspection was conceived as a way to control schools instead of strengthening the partnership. This evaluative approach resulting from NPM practices has shown some positive changes in the school outcomes. The study of Mathaba (2014) on 18 externally evaluated underperforming schools in all 4 districts of Mpumalanga Province shows that, WSE or external evaluation has improved the school outcomes in these schools. 90.2% of the respondents agreed that this evaluation process improved schools' outcomes. Prior to this assessment was initiated, these schools were in a critical situation with a low quality service provision system. Ndaba (2015) supposes it as the developmental approach of inspection. However, Ndaba also assumes that this quality assurance mechanism still has a 'policing' approach towards independent (private) schools that constitutes about 7% of the total schools (DBE, 2014). This argument takes place as because the government wants all schools to follow some specific curricula, which Ndaba sees as opposite to the democratic value of accepting diversity.

As aforementioned, the PSC conducts the inspection in a small number of sample districts and schools to make sure that the quality of service delivery is satisfactory to the customers' needs. The 2016 school inspection report reveals that 99 schools of 9 provinces averaging 11 schools in each province have been inspected in 2016 (PSC, 2016).

**Teachers against inspection:** Pointing out to the teachers' absenteeism, the policy makers are considering reintroducing the inspection system which discontinued since 1994. In addition, they assume that the power of head teachers as the independent actors has been eroded due to the influence of teachers' unions, which also requires strong inspection system. However, teachers' unions show a strong opposition against the inspection system saying that it is more about criticizing and harassing teachers by external interference. The Department of Education spokesman of the KwaZulu-Natal province, Muzi Mahlambi, stated in this regards that "Teachers don't need to be policed by inspectors. Inspectors are there for school support and professional development to ensure teachers have the required resources and they act as a link between the district and province," (Anthony, 2013).

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

Findings of this study suggest that most of the six countries face some common challenges that are the core problems of ineffective inspection system. The **table 1** gives an overview of these major challenges:

Challenges	Bangladesh	India	Cambodia	South Africa	Tanzania	Uganda
Teachers' opposition towards inspection considering it as a control mechanism or even ineffective to enhance school improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of financial and human resources	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Inspection is irregular	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Inspectors-to school ratio/shortage of inspectors	1: 26 (primary)	1: 205 (Delhi ); 1: 76 (Kerala)	-		28% posts were vacant during 2010	1: 90
Inspectors are not capable of addressing the real problems of the schools and provide with meaningful recommendations for the challenges.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Inspection materials are not effective to address the aspects directly related to the learning achievements and the improvement of teaching.	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Less division of labour makes it harder for the inspectors to regularly visit schools	-	✓	-	-	-	✓

**Table 1:** The common and frequently facing challenges of the inspection system in six countries according to the findings.

*\* In South Africa, inspection from the field administration or district level is carried out in the form of evaluation. However, central administration conducts inspection in a small number of schools and districts to check their functioning as illustrated in the case study.*

- Not available.

The study finds that inspection is not regularly taking place in the schools of majority countries due to various reasons, most of which are related to the resource constraints. Moreover, inspection system is inefficient to address the main problems of the schools that are directly linked to the learning outcomes. Hence, from a broader point of view, the impact of inspection, whether it leads to the better results or not, is still a matter of further exploration by equipping the system with enough instruments for being capable of addressing the main challenges. More precisely, the fact that inspection is seen as a negative practice because of its controlling approach evident in almost all countries is mainly the results of poor inspection materials to address the main challenges and the lack of training of the inspectors. Therefore, a better mechanism to handle these challenges may produce expected outcomes, which need to be explored.

During the last two decades, the increasing focus of school-based management, partnership development among the local stakeholders to enhance the mutual accountability, result-based management, among others, have been assumed as a way to make the schools more autonomous. These practices are also known as the principles of new public management (Ball & Youdell, 2008). However, in reality, it “is replaced with a new form of accountability and control” approach, thus, the school “heads and teachers are increasingly constrained within new and tighter grids of authoritative hierarchical relations” (Grimaldi & Serpieri, 2013: 329).


An analysis<sup>1</sup> of various policy documents of these six countries shows that the policy makers increasingly focus on the school autonomy, mutual accountability and result-based management which have mostly started since the beginning of the 2010s. New organizations for monitoring and evaluation, assessment, quality assurance have also been established in these countries. Hence, the purpose of public sector reforms by the governments to make schools more autonomous stands in contradiction to the school inspection system which focuses on constant control and supervision as evident in the findings of all countries. However, withdrawing of inspection in the form of supervision or evaluation cannot also be a sustainable solution as there is mistrust among the citizens towards governance system because of irregularities and organizational inefficiency to satisfactorily serve the clients. Illegal private tuition, low service quality inside the classroom, as well as bribe exchange, as evident above, are, for instance, the few causes of this mistrust. Because of that, education policy makers in South Africa are again trying to start inspection system in addition to assessment and evaluation. However, teachers are raising their voice against it (Anthony, 2013).

Except for South Africa (upper-middle income group), other 5 countries either belong to the lower or lower-middle income group as defined by the World Bank (World Bank, 2017). The discussion of the six countries explores that the inspection is mostly basic inputs focused emphasizing less on the aspects of learning achievements or outputs. This means that the developmental stage of the countries is closely linked to the poor inspection system as the inspectors often suffer from a dilemma- what to focus on during the inspection. In other words, the resources constraints make it hard to decide whether inputs and process such as infrastructure and teaching or even other aspects of schools’ learning environment should be emphasized. It cannot also be forgotten that, insufficient professional orientation is similarly responsible for the inefficient inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis was carried out by the author using these six countries’ documents on primary and secondary education policy/plan and strategies as well as education monitoring and annual performance reports.





Moreover, the legal requirements are still aspirational in these countries. For instance, although it is mandatory for schools to have a library according to the school infrastructure guidelines of Bangladesh and India, inspection form does not have any focus on this issue.

The above discussion shows that the inspection challenges are the problems of the overall administrative culture as well as resource constraints. Hence, any innovative strategies including the principles of new public management may take a significant amount of time to show effective results. However, a constant effort focusing on holistic and coordinated evaluation and inspection processes involving all actors should be taken into account in the education policy agenda.

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