Examining the Benefit of School Inspection on Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Dubai Private Schools

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Abstract

School inspection is one of the most challenging aspects in education; it represents an approach of accountability in teaching and learning. Moreover, school inspection provides policy and decision makers with accurate information about the current state of education in their respective institutions. The main purpose of this study is to examine and determine the benefits of school inspection on teaching and learning in Dubai-based private schools, and to give some recommendations into how to effectively conduct school inspection that would positively influence teaching and learning. The research used a mixed-method approach. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion and documents were used to collect data. This research was based on four private schools in Dubai with a total of 37 participants comprising 2 inspectors, 4 head-teachers and 31 teachers. The findings show that school inspection has a significant role in school improvement, especially in teaching and learning. Teachers acknowledged that the feedback provided by inspectors informed teaching and learning practice. However, school inspection also has a negative impact on teaching and learning; for instance, it forces some schools to show activities they have never done before. Moreover, the school inspection reports and recommendations, in some cases, are superficial and are not related to the school context; moreover, they often do not show teachers how they can respond to criticism in the reality of their teaching practice. Nevertheless, the relationship between inspectors and teachers is not that positive, especially in some subjects, such as Arabic language and Islamic Studies.paper is just a sample template for the prospective authors of IISTE Over the decades, the concepts of

Keywords: teaching and learning, accountability, report, feedback, school inspection; school self-evaluation.

1. Introduction

The concept of accountability in education is not new. School inspection and supervision has been well-known since the early days of public education at the end of 18th century. School inspection was introduced in France by Napoleon's regime (Grauwe, 2007). Ehren and Honingh (2011) explain that in 1801 the Dutch Inspectorate of Education was launched, and remains one of the oldest Inspectorates in Europe. Then, in the United Kingdom (UK), in 1839, the first inspection was established by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) (Wilcox, 2000; Macbeath, 2006).

Accountability in education varies; in addition to school inspection as a means of accountability, market choice and the school voucher system also act as accountability mechanisms (Lee & Wong, 2002). The idea behind accountability in education is to enhance the teacher's commitment to provide the pupils with better education (Neave, 1987), and to inform citizens and parents as taxpayers about the quality of education provided (Neave, 1987; Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

For this purpose, and to meet every student's learning needs, the United States of America (USA) has ascertained the concept of accountability in education with the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) policy (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). In the Middle East, many countries carried out school inspection services following independence (Grauwe, 2001). However, in many African countries, such as Tanzania, school inspection services were started in 1903 when the country was under German colonial rule (Haule, 2012).

The system of inspection has witnessed continuous improvement and reforms at all levels, from the organization to the goals and purpose, as well as processes. Thus, in the UK, as one of the most developed educational systems and one of the first countries to run inspection services (since 1839 by HMI), the country has replaced the HMI with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in 1990. OFSTED has added more factors to the previous HMI system in order to improve the quality of educational inspection. These factors are school self-evaluation (SSE) and school action plans as a consequence of an inspection (Rosenthal, 2004).

Why do we need school inspection? School inspection plays a significant role in ensuring the quality of education, as it is almost the sole method by which governments can ensure and evaluate the quality of education. Moreover, governments are unable to implement the national policies and goals without school inspection. Nevertheless, by running school inspections, governments can meet the challenges of globalization by creating a competitive workforce (Segerholm, 2018; Kemethofer et al, 2017; Wilcox, 2000; Neave, 1987). Ehren and Honingh (2012) summarised 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. Secondly, school inspection has to encourage schools to provide students with a satisfactory level of education, and to increase their capability for student achievement. There are varied views about the impact of school inspection on

teaching and learning, ranging from positive to negative impact on teachers' and learners' emotions (Tunç, İnandı & Gündüz, 2015), classroom practice (Webb et al, 1998), assessment (Rosenthal, 2004) and needless extra work on teachers which affect their professional development (Webb et al, 1998).

2. Review of relevant literature

The term or phrase 'public accountability for quality education services' is well-known in the literature, with early studies conducted more than thirty years ago (Kogan, 1988; Semyonov and Platonova, 2017; FrøLich, 2011). Three known theories and theoretical frameworks that underlie school inspection are: Scientific Management theory, Human Relations theory and Critical theory. Shedding light on these theories is so significant and would be useful in helping to understand how school inspection would have a positively influences teaching and learning.

The scientific management theory was created by Fredrick Winston Taylor in the 1880s. The main idea of this theory is how to organize the work professionally and to design a mechanism that improves labour productivity and saves time and monetary resources (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). However, the scientific theory is criticized for treating workers as machines and killing their creativity (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Taylor claims that workers need to feel compliance and need to follow the instructions of their superiors (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005) and proposes four approaches to advance worker productivity: breaking down the required job into standardized units; selecting employees carefully and enhance their professional training; using incentives to motivate workers according to their adherence to the work; controlling the work process and linking the wages to the performance. In the USA, this theory was implemented in education in the 1920s, and it was linked with school inspections in the 1980s (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). In the UK, the theory was made clear in education, and it has led the government to focus on developing the science of job. Thus, more research on expansion of leadership and management took place in Her Majesty's Inspection (HMI) and then in OFSTED (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Ehren & Visscher, 2006, 2008).

The theory of Human Relations emerged in the 1930s by Elton Mayo, who argues that meeting the social needs of the employees will increase their productivity (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Thus, employees should be active members in decision-making formula (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Human Relations theory depicts that individuals will be self-directed and more committed to work, if their social needs are met. Furthermore, they can be creative when they are motivated (Druker, 1991). Hence, workers' needs for recognition are more important in determining their productivity (Druker, 1991; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Druker (1991) assumes that leaders can improve an employee's productivity and quality by considering the employee's knowledge and experience of the work as the starting point. In education, teachers are the best placed to know their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, they should be treated as humans rather than as packages of energy. Therefore, school inspectors are expected to support teachers as facilitators and improve their job satisfaction (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) illustrate that school inspection policy-making for better education quality needs to involve teachers in the evaluation process and create a feeling that teachers are significant and useful in improving schools.

Critical theory is derived from the philosophical approach that endeavours to identify and challenge the idea of the established knowledge (Visser, 2017). Bryman (2004) conceives that established knowledge has a philosophical background based on epistemological and ontological orientations. Critical theory opposes structured frameworks such as positivism but values different interpretative categories for different social phenomenon; it gives different theoretical views to illustrate how to solve problems. Critical theory encourages social scientists to look at human beings as unique with unique feelings and control of their lives (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, 2011). Therefore, critical theory influences human beings' self-awareness, recognition of problems and consciousness (Tripp, 1992). In education and in school inspection, teachers are humans with total freedom and awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, thus the role of inspectors is to ease the process of teaching and learning, to encourage the teachers to reflect on their performance, and to provide teachers with solutions when facing any difficulty in teaching and learning (Tripp, 1992; Druker, 1991). This relationship between teachers and inspectors creates a common ground for betterment of the students and developing their achievements (Leeuw, 2002). Critical Theory in school inspection context aims at respecting teachers' values, and not to impose solutions. In doing so, the creativity of teachers and student achievement will be enhanced (Kemmis & Carr, 1986).

Apart from school inspections, there are other forms of accountability. The market choice approach is one example of accountability which is practiced in the USA, UK and Australia, expects schools to be responsible for their customers, and it aims to give parents and students greater attention regarding their own choice of the quality of education (Levin, 1991). Similarly, the School Voucher System involves the state paying money to parents as financial aid to support their children's education. This generates competition among schools thus potentially raising quality (Contreras, 2002; Sammons, 2006).

2.2 School Inspection Reactions and Effects

The nature of the relationships and communication styles from inspectors towards teachers and school leaders influence the acceptance of the feedback given to schools from inspectors (Balcı et al, 2011; Rosenthal, 2004; Ehren & Visscher, 2006). School inspection feedbacks are very significant in improving school performance, and for more betterment, school leaders are expected to carry out an action plan to implement school inspection recommendations with the required resources (Ehren & Visscher, 2008). In the UK, teachers and school principals perceive OFSTED school inspection as an essential instrument of accountability (Rosenthal, 2004).

Chapman (2001) claims that as a result of OFSTED school inspection, a small percentage of teachers started to change their teaching and learning strategies to develop their professional performance. However, when the school inspections process does not run effectively then it is simply a waste of time and public resources. Therefore, it is essential that communication, feedback, follow-up on recommendations and assessing inspections delivery must be truly efficient and effective. Stride

School inspection recommendations have implications that may result in them being rejected by schools for many reasons. These may include that they work in theory rather in practice; not linear with school contexts; require extra resources; consume time and money; generic; and repetitive from school to school.

School inspections aim to improve education quality. There are three different ways to improve school performance through inspection, namely: improvement of student performance, strategic thinking to improve school policies and classroom performance and capacity building, which continuously improve schools by enhancing all players (Ehren and Visscher, 2006).

The intended effects of school inspections aim to improve school performance and achieve a high quality of education, which is defined as the added value of student achievement (Ehren and Honingh, 2012; Ehren, et al., 2005). De Wolf and Janssens (2007) sum up school inspection effects as to ensure the quality level of education; compliance with school regulations; and to inspire the overall quality of school improvements (Ehren, et al., 2005; De Wolf and Janssens, 2007). Chapman (2002) finds that school teachers think that their experiences and interactions with school inspection processes lead to a positive impact on developing professional performance. Chapman (2002) advocates that some teachers and school leaders believe that school inspections have a positive impact on teachers' classroom performance, particularly teaching and learning strategies and provide them with the skills they need (Segerholm, 2017; Tefera, 2010; De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Chapman, 2002, 2001; Ouston, et al., 1997).

However, inspections have unintended effects. De Wolf and Janssens (2007) argue that there are four unintended effects:

1) Window dressing: which leads to an artificial appearance, and includes false documents, cheating pupils' tests, excluding weak students from exams and getting weak teachers off to prevent their lessons from being observed during inspections (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren and Visscher, 2006; Chapman, 2002, 2001; Brimblecombe & Ormston, 1995).

2) Unintended strategic behaviour: when school inspections procedures concentrate on data and documents prepared by teachers, such as scheme of works, lesson plans and syllabi. By doing so, inspections make teachers teach solely for test and inspections (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren and Visscher, 2006; Chapman, 2002, 2001; Brimblecombe & Ormston, 1995).

3) Occurrence of stress: teachers and school leaders experience stress and apprehensiveness during school inspections (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren and Visscher, 2006; Chapman, 2002, 2001; Brimblecombe & Ormston, 1995).

4) Market forces in education: this happens when schools face the dilemma of teachers and school leaders who shift from poorly-performing schools to schools with better inspection reports.

What is the state of school inspection in Dubai and what are the reactions and effects? In Dubai, there is currently very little research focusing on the effects of school inspection, although local and international media as well as organisational reports have reported on Dubai inspection. Local websites and newspapers have published the rating of school inspection alongside articles and discussions about successful stories and experiences. Moreover, many international channels acknowledged the practice of Dubai inspection as a remarkable reform in the region (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014; Swan, 2014; Lewis, 2010; Sankar, 2009). This paper draws on the tenets of critical theory and pragmatism to guide its analysis. It seeks to look beyond the policy framework and formal structures to understand the unique perspectives, experiences and feelings of individuals and groups involved in the school inspection process and how these influence the effectiveness of the process. It also seeks to draw on multiple and practical evidence to inform its conclusions.

3. Aims of the study

In view of the above, this study aims to:

- Examine the benefit of school inspections on teaching and learning in Dubai private schools.
- Investigate the views of school teachers and head-teachers on school inspection process.

- Recommend ways on how school inspection can be enhanced in order to have a positive impact on teaching and learning in Dubai's private schools.

The study will provide empirical evidence on the benefits of school inspections on teaching and learning in Dubai's private schools, and how teachers and school leaders perceive school inspections. This is expected to be the first academic research exploring school inspections in Dubai, and to be a main source informing policy and decision makers on what improvement is needed for inspections to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Moreover, this study contributes to the literature as a reference on accountability in education, teaching and learning in Dubai.

4. Context

4.1 Education in Dubai

JThe UAE is a federation created in December 1971 and comprises of seven Emirates on the Arabian Gulf, namely: Abu Dhabi (the Capital City), Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. According to the World Bank, the population of the UAE was 9.086 million in 2014 (World Bank, 2015). Education is a priority for the Dubai government, the private schools constitute about 88% of total students (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). The educational system in Dubai has witnessed a significant evolution since the declaration of the UAE in 1971. The Dubai education policy aims to raise the quality of its education system to meet the international standards. Authority to oversee schools in Dubai has been devolved. The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was formed in 2007 by Law No. (30) of 2006, as a public authority with legal, financial and administrative independency. The KHDA is in charge of quality for private schools, and has the power to inspect schools (UAE Year Book, 2013; Cuadra & Thacker, 2014).

According to the KHDA, the total number of private schools in Dubai has increased from 143 in 2008-2009 to 174 private schools in 2016-2017 (11 Government schools) (KHDA, 2017c). During this period, the total number of students enrolled in Dubai's private schools has grown from 177,587 to 259,921 (KHDA, 2017c). Private schools in Dubai provide education to both Emiratis and non-Emiratis in 15 different curricula; these include, UK, US, UAE, Indian, International Baccalaureate and others (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). In 2017, among the 174 private schools, 73 schools follow the British curriculum, 34 the American curriculum and 33 schools run the Indian curriculum (KHDA, 2017c).

Dubai education has shown a significant outcome worldwide. For example, as a member of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Dubai students learning, in 2011, was at the top of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) participating countries. Whereas, internationally, Dubai students' learning is still below average, which was the same result for The Program for International Student Assessment PISA (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). These results can be improved by focusing on the quality of education, filling the gap and the variations between public and private schools and across private schools who offer different curricula (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). In the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015, KHDA is driven to improve quality of education by Ensuring that Dubai students have access to high quality schools and universities, which provide them with the knowledge and skills required for active contribution in the economy (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014).

4.2 The KHDA Inspection framework

The KHDA runs an annual external inspection to measure and evaluate the growth and quality of education in the private schools. The Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) was established in 2007 to monitor schools in Dubai under the shadow of the KHDA. The main roles of DSIB are: to position education quality standards and to set indicators for measuring them; adopt a valuable system to inspect school performance using standards and published reports; adopt the needed measures and mechanisms to help improve low performing schools; carry out and enhance research and studies on education quality; and so on (United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework, 2017; KHDA, 2017; Azzam, 2017; Cuadra & Thacker, 2014).

The DSIB requests schools to undertake an internal self-evaluation as the starting point of the school inspection process. The scale of school performance during inspection comes in four grades: Outstanding; Very good; Good; Acceptable; Weak and Very Weak (United Arab Emirates School Inspection Framework, 2017; KHDA, 2017a).

The Dubai inspection system was developed after consulting with regional and international experts in school inspection systems, such as the UK, Scotland, the Netherlands and New Zealand (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). Both school inspection and self-evaluation methods play significant roles to improve the outcomes for all pupils and shed light on seven key areas: 1) students' attainment, progress and learning skills; 2) students' personal and social development; 3) teaching and assessment; 4) the curriculum and the educational needs of students; 5) student protection and support; 6) the leadership and management of the school; 7) the school's overall performance (KHDA, 2017; 2015). The organization of school inspections in Dubai is undertaken by the DSIB, which is responsible for inspecting schools once every year by an experienced, expert inspection team put together by the DSIB from a regional and international pool (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014).

Inspection visits are done annually in Dubai. According to Cuadra and Thacker (2014), the reason for this is that the KHDA wants to track progress in all private schools. The KHDA informs schools about visits three weeks in advance and to return a self-evaluation report provided by the DSIB. This self-evaluation is done alongside information gathered by surveys from teachers and parents. During the visit to schools, inspectors interview teachers and leaders and listen to students, and they conduct classroom observation and evaluate pupils' work. Then, data to be collected from the sources mentioned above is triangulated and analysed by the inspection team. As one of the main inspection instruments, reports play a core role by informing schools about the expectations of parents and school communities, and policy and decision makers. These reports are very important for parents in choosing quality education for their children. Furthermore, they play a significant role in improving and monitoring school performance.

Educational decision and policy makers conceive that school inspection is one of the most significant instruments used to ensure that schools are accountable for the services provided through many elements. For instance, accessible data would promote better competition between schools; drive schools to improve service delivery and provision; and improve educational outcomes. In addition, linking school fee increases to performance, and promoting the opportunity for parents to respond to surveys conducted by the KHDA as part of the inspection process would advance student performance and school effectiveness (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014).

In order to achieve its goals, and to improve the inspection system, the KHDA and the DSIB in association with a group of school principals established the What Works platform in September 2012. The What Works framework contains a series of events where educators and professionals from private schools are invited to share their best practices. What Works is fully sponsored by the KHDA and run by schools themselves as they shift from competition to collaboration (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014). What Works discusses themes proposed by the inspection process as significant topics and subjects. This event starts with a generic event then a discussion about leadership takes place, which is followed by a one-day event about different important themes, such as school governance, special needs education, teaching science, mathematics, Arabic and Islamic education, etc. In these events, teachers and principals from each participant school are invited to present their excellent performance in a specific area (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014)

The positive contribution of education on society and economic outcomes encourages many countries to provide adequate education for each student, and many other countries, such as the USA and UK, to focus on school improvement and education quality. This also encouraged UNESCO to announce that Education For All (EFA) is an imperative (UNESCO, 2004; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Due to this fact, the need for an external evaluation can improve teacher accountability for monitoring and providing quality education to the students. Despite the arguments for the need for school inspection, there is hardly any research on Dubai school inspection, although local and international media as well as organisational reports have reported on Dubai inspection. Local websites and newspapers have published the rating of school inspection alongside articles and discussions about successful stories and experiences. Moreover, many international channels acknowledged the practice of Dubai inspection as a remarkable reform in the region (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014; Swan, 2014; Lewis, 2010; Sankar, 2009).

5. Methodology

This study is based on a pragmatic approach in which data is drawn from a wide range of sources to achieve the research objective (Cohen et al, 2011). It combines both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to develop a mixed methods strategy. According to Denscombe (2008, 270-283), "The mixed methods approach has emerged as a "'third paradigm' for social research" and that it is very beneficial for many reasons. For instance, it improves the accuracy of data; creates a complete picture by combining data from complementary sources; compensates specific strengths and weaknesses of particular methods; developing the analysis of the findings using contrasting data. Data was collected from teachers, school principals and school inspectors. The overall data collection methods were focus group discussion, interviews, questionnaires and documentary. However, the intention to collect data from student reports was dropped because there is no national examination in Dubai for private schools to measure and compare the results of students to understand the impact of school inspections on student performance. The only available data in this regard is the participation of the students of the private schools in international examinations, such as PISA and MENA (Cuadra & Thacker, 2014) which was not appropriate here.

Table 1. Population of the study

	Teachers 31		Head Teachers 4		School inspectors 2	
Questionnaires	Yes		Yes		No	
Interview	No		Yes		Yes	
Focus discussion group	Yes		No		No	
Gender	F = 22	M = 9	F = 1	M = 3	F = 0	M = 2

The study sampled out four private schools in Dubai through a purposeful sampling strategy, based on schools' curricula and ranking in the KHDA inspection report in 2014-2015. These schools have been selected on this basis to make it more representative of the different curriculums and illustrate poor and rich schools. Furthermore, 31 teachers were purposefully sampled from the four schools; 8 each from three schools and 7 from the fourth. The research was supported by the University through providing an introductory letter to schools and to the KHDA to allow access to schools. Private school teachers and principals were the primary target participants in this study, for they are the key players in the school inspection process and are responsible for the curriculum implementation. This study also targeted school inspectors for they have leading and significant role in assuring the quality of education in schools. Thus, the researchers considered that these participants would provide the study with real voice and rich experience of how they perceive the contribution of school inspection to the betterment of teaching and learning. The data collection focused on the following elements to understand the benefits of school inspection: Communication and pre-inspection visits; classroom observation; learners' input; contribution to teachers' performance, and inspection feedback and reports. Ethical issues were observed ensuring confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of participants (Bryman, 2004). In addition to participating in the questionnaires, school head-teachers and directors in all four schools were engaged in the interviews; five teachers were also involved in a focus discussion group (Table 1).

6. Findings, discussion and recommendations

To what extent do school inspections benefit teaching and learning in schools? How do teachers and head teachers perceive school inspectors as supportive and critical friends? How can school inspection be carried out in order to have a positive impact on teaching and learning in Dubai's private schools? The data was based five aspects of the school inspection process: communication and pre-inspection visits; classroom observation; learners' input; contribution to teachers' performance, and inspection feedback and reports. Data from the 37 participants show that most teachers and head teachers are experienced teachers, familiar with the KHDA inspection framework, with at least one experience going through the inspection process and have the requisite level of educational qualification (Bachelor, post-graduate and Master degrees).

6.1 Communication and Pre-Inspection Visits:

Communication and pre-inspection visits are important aspects of the school inspection that can contribute to the usefulness and success of the process. To what extent has school inspectors provided schools with information before visiting them? All the teachers and head-teachers who participated agreed that the KHDA inspection provides schools with information about the time of school inspection visits and the key indicators and criteria of the inspection. The majority of teachers perceived the inspections as opportunities for the teachers and the schools to show how capable they are. However, a small number of participants also think that weak and poor schools and teachers would use this time for preparation and making up their evidence so that the school can be evaluated in a positive way. In view of this, a head-teachers (Participant 17) had this to say: "schools should be informed just three days prior to the inspection visit not more, this will show the reality of school performance."

On inspectors' communication style with teachers, the data indicate that 21 of the 35 respondents agreed that school inspectors present themselves as critical friends by using friendly language with teachers, whereas, 14 respondents disagreed with this claim. Data from the interviews with head-teachers agreed with the former view, with some exceptions when it comes to the school inspectors who inspect and observe both Arabic language and Islamic Studies subjects. For example, Participant 26 (a teacher) added:

Some school inspectors when observing Arabic language and Islamic Studies come and in their minds they are the only ones who are experts, and that teachers should only listen to them. They have a superiority complex, and furthermore, they do not come as friends, but instead they gossip about those teachers by name.

Another participant (Participant 3) stated:

Generally speaking, school inspectors communicate with teachers as friends and facilitators. However, when it happens and you hear that the language style between a school inspector and a teacher is not friendly, I think it is due to individual weaknesses they both have.

In general, evidence shows that the language style between school inspectors and teachers is healthy and friendly. However, the KHDA is expected to encourage all inspectors to be critical friends, especially for those who inspect Arabic language and Islamic Studies, nevertheless, the inspectors of both subjects should have a relevant qualification to be able to observe and suggest any improvements in the same context. Based on evidence above, it is clear that KHDA provide schools with detailed information and materials about school inspection before the actual inspection takes place; this is important to help schools and teachers have clear understanding of process and aspects of the school activities the inspection would focus on. It also helps to make inspection effective and efficient as schools would tailor preparation towards that. On the other hand, this provides a leeway for schools to present 'artificial' evidence to reflect the focus of the inspection thereby misleading the process about the real situation in the schools. This may lead to mislabelling of schools such as

'Outstanding'. What strategies could the KHDA use to offset this gap? One way is to adopt a more 'continuous' type of approach to the inspection in which inspection is broken down into interrelated components that culminate to provide a holistic and realistic school inspection reports that reflects the true state of schools.

6.2 Classroom observation:

On the aspect of classroom (lesson) observation conducted by school inspectors on teaching and learning, about 95% of the participants (teachers and head-teachers) confirmed that school inspectors do class observation when visiting schools while 5% argued that school inspectors neglect the classroom observation component of the inspection. Participants also agreed that the classroom observation is beneficial in the sense that it provides inspectors with a first-hand information about what actually goes on in the classrooms and an opportunity to feedback for improvement. However, there was evidence that sometimes some of the school inspectors do not carry out class observation for certain subjects or even for all teachers in the school. For example, a participant lamented:

I understand that school inspectors can't visit all teachers or even all classes, as they are few. But, what I do not understand is why school inspectors ignore specific subjects and only focus on five main subjects? I think they should visit and observe all subjects. What message do they give to teachers and students in a particular subject? Such as history? When the inspectors do not visit history or geography they reveal to the teacher and students that the subject is not important, I think this is wrong, since all subjects are important and have their impact on our lives. (Participant 22)

Based on the above, it is evident that school inspection conducts classroom observation as a key source of evidence to determine the quality of teaching and learning in schools. However, the KHDA school inspection process focuses on five main subjects (Arabic language, Islamic Studies, Mathematics, Science, and English language), whereas, other subjects are not given that level of importance while running school inspection. Why has the inspector framework focused on five subjects instead of the whole curriculum subjects? If there are any strategic and policy-based reasons, then the KHDA needs to make this reasons available to schools on the basis for the focus. Alternative, it can consider including the other subjects to make the process inclusive to all aspects of the school.

6.3 Learners' input:

Learners are important stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. The data show that 28 of the 35 teachers and head teachers who participated in the research stated that inspectors do talk to learners as part of the KHDA inspection process. This piece of information was needed to find out whether or not school inspection teams offer opportunities to students to give their accounts of the process of teaching and learning as part of evidence to determine quality in schools. However, there was a general conscientious among participants that school inspectors only ask students about their knowledge of the society but not about academic issues. One head-teacher (Participant 5) had this to say:

School inspectors discuss the academic issues, such as teaching and learning with teachers and school leaders, and not with the pupils. But, if they speak with students, their conversation is just about the issue of national culture and society, such as the national anthem. (Participant 5)

How much more and type of information can inspectors draw from students to inform the school inspection? There could be psychological and indeed political reasons why pupils/students are not asked questions about academic and related areas of the school life. However, the importance of information from students about their view on the quality of the teaching and learning process cannot be over emphasised. In order to gain more insights about students' views about what is happening in the teaching and learning process, inspectors could institute indirect questions related to the students' academic activities such as asking them of the most interesting/uninteresting activities in the subjects; why those activities are interested/not interested.

6.4 The School inspection feedback and reports:

Part of the instruments sought to understand the extent to which school inspection feedback and reports are valuable and supportive to teachers. Data from the questionnaires show that 19 out of the 35 teachers and head-teachers in the study saw the reports and feedback given by school inspectors to be supportive and useful to help improve practice, this was the same for focus group discussions, even though a few head-teachers argued that these reports do not reflect the school context and they are not practical. For example, a teacher (Participant 9) in a focus group discussion explained that sometimes the inspection reports submitted to the school are different from what was given during the inspection visit. Another example from a head teacher (Participant 1) commented that sometimes school inspectors give feedback that cannot be implemented because it does not fit with the school context. However, school inspectors have a different perspective to this, for example, one school inspector (Participant 21) commented: 'We visit schools and observe school environments and classes and eventually provide these schools with our feedback to help them to improve, by providing them with the best

practice worldwide; however, when visiting these same schools, we find the same problems, which means that the schools neglect our reports'. This indicates that school inspectors provide feedback and recommendations but do not have the power to enforce implementation or encourage the recommended actions. Nevertheless, both school inspectors and head-teachers agreed that sometimes, the recommendations were not implemented. The benefits of school reports and feedback has a relatively positive view from most teachers and head teachers with the negatives coming from the inconsistency between feedback provided during the school inspection visits and the written reports sent to schools. It would be important for inspectors and KHDA to provide focus and consistent reports to help schools to be clear about the strengths and areas that require improvement; this would help to increase the benefits of the inspection process to schools and teachers which would invariable lead to raising the quality of schools.

6.5 Contribution of School Inspection to teacher performance
How do school inspections contribute to the performance of teachers in areas such as teaching and learning improvement, professional support and school inspection feedback? Data from the questionnaires demonstrate that 28 respondents (80% of the sample) consider that school inspection helps them improve in teaching and learning. For example, a teacher (Participant 30) stated that school inspectors offer advice in all teaching and learning areas, including scheme of work, measuring attainment and progress in the lesson, students' abilities differentiation, lesson plan and use of ICT in class. The data from focus group discussion were consistent with the data from the questionnaires. Teachers in the focus discussion group acknowledged that the role of school inspection is significant in terms of improving teaching and learning. School inspection visitation is an annual competitive occasion for schools and teachers; teachers use this opportunity to improve and show their teaching and learning methodologies to demonstrate to school leaders to increase salaries as school inspection reports create a market choice for teachers and schools. Moreover, findings from the interviews supported the claim that school inspection improves teaching and learning. One head-teacher had this to say: "School inspection gives outstanding schools an opportunity to show why they are outstanding, by including the best practice of teaching and learning worldwide."

However, the picture was not entirely positive. One head-teacher (Participant 30) said that during school inspection visits, inspectors usually collect all the available materials and records of the subject and then they give marks based on that. He noted, "They sometimes do not provide our teachers or subject leaders with formative feedback or listen to them; instead they just give superficial feedback because they are in a rush and they say that we do not have time to listen to you, this is when you come to Arabic language and Islamic Studies classes". Another head-teacher said that some school inspectors come to schools as judges not as friends, they are here to evaluate not to help in improving teaching and learning. A teacher from the focus group discussion questioned: "Why don't school inspectors show us or even name how and where we can see this outstanding lesson in all its aspects in order to learn from it? Or why don't school inspectors themselves present a lesson to see whether what they suggest in theory would work in practice, which we can then emulate". Another participant in the focus group discussion objectively explained that the KHDA is really appreciated for the innovative 'What Works' initiative which is an event to give schools and teachers the needed professional support by showing them the best practice after finishing the annual school inspection. However, the participant suggested that event could include other activities, such as workshops, and the timing of this event should also be after school time not during school time when everybody is in class.

7. Fear and anxiety related to School Inspection
One of the hallmarks of most school inspection is anxiety, fear and tension among teachers and the entire school communities; this is no different from the KHDA School Inspection. Regarding this point, all of the respondents agreed that school inspection creates an environment of fear and tension before and during school visits. This is due to the fact that teachers' performance will be reported. One teacher explained:

> The problem with school inspection visits is twofold: first of all, school inspectors come to catch our mistakes, and secondly, school leaders will blame the teachers when the school gets a poor report, whereas, outstanding reports will be attributed to school leadership.

The focus discussion group noted that, some school inspectors are not critical friends to teachers but fault hunters. However, one head teacher argued that sometimes the tension and fear is due to poor school preparation and performance. Another head teacher had this to say: "School inspection is a good opportunity for our school teachers to learn from inspectors and to get formative feedback and to show why we are an outstanding school." The data shows clearly teachers concerns about the fear and tension that comes with school inspection, although some head teachers have alternative views about this.

8. Discussion and recommendations
As the literature review points out, school inspection has many benefits to both learners and teachers, although

the way it is conceptualised and engaged by different stakeholders would invariably have different effects on the purpose and benefits of the process. As a country aiming to improve the quality of education and to bring it up to international standards, the Dubai School Inspection framework is an important tool to help achieved this goal. In addition, the policy will also ensure accountability across the sector. There is evidence from the findings that the school inspection is effective and benefiting teaching and learning, however there are concerns about some aspects of the inspection which can potentially erode the benefits. Issues such as fear and anxiety can lead to stressful situations which can affect teacher effectiveness.

To be able to deal with the concerns of fear and tension, it would be useful for all stakeholders to acknowledge that this issue exists and to work together to see how this can be resolved or at least minimised. One way to do this is to carefully study the school inspection process to identify potential aspects that are responsible for the issues and discuss ways to make them more 'user friendly'. Another approach is to examine the advice of one of the participants' that schools can avoid fear and tension by avoiding poor preparation; engaging actively and appropriately preparing for the inspection. However, it can be argued that the basis and cause of the fear and tension may not necessarily be lack of preparation, but may be due to the pressure of intensive preparations within a very short time span which invariably adds more work and anxiety to teachers and head teachers. To significantly reduce the fear and tension related to school inspection, schools can consider integrating the process into their daily activities to avoid the short time preparation required. In addition, inspectors could also be encouraged to develop a more 'critical friendship' approach to ensure that whilst they are friendly to teachers and schools, they go on with what is required. Teachers expect school inspections to be more helpful and supportive in particular subjects and areas of teaching and learning practice. Teachers would highly appreciate school inspection support and recommendation if the latter provide teachers with examples of best practice in these areas of concern. Nevertheless, teachers expect school inspectors to understand different school contexts and backgrounds, by indicating their strengths and weaknesses in order to facilitate the implementations of these recommendations

The school inspection framework has continuously been improved to ensure that it is effective and reflects the context of each school, however there is still room to improve the inspection process. The views from some of the participants suggest that schools are really 'alarmed' by school inspections and the effects any negative outcome might have on the school as a whole. Hence, almost all schools do whatever they can to impress the inspectors which may lead to what may be termed as 'window dressing' (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007). This is a situation in which schools put up artificial appearance, and includes false documents, cheating pupils' tests, excluding weak students from exams etc. The inspection process needs to be flexible enough to capture the real state of quality of schools. One way to overcome this is to have a close follow-up inspection (after the main school inspection) to determine consistency and to evaluate the level and impact of implementing school inspection recommendations. Alternatively, annual inspections could strengthen the focus on the degree to which schools implement school inspections recommendations.

There is also evidence that the inspection process pays attention to some subjects over others, for example, school inspection process focuses on five main subjects (Arabic language, Islamic Studies, Mathematics, Science, and English language). The finding shows that some teachers would want to see all subjects given equal attention; however, the logistical effects of this may still needs to be determined. If there are any strategic and policy-based reasons why inspection focuses of specific subjects, then these need to be communicated to schools on the basis for the focus. Alternative, it can consider including the other subjects to make the process inclusive to all aspects of the school.

9. Conclusion

This research has examined the benefits of the school inspection on teaching and learning from the perspectives of teachers and head teachers working in private schools in Dubai and school inspectors working with KHDA. The research focused on looking at some aspects of the KHDA inspection process which included: classroom observation; learners' input; contribution to teachers' performance, inspection feedback and reports, and communication and pre-inspection visits. The KHDA school inspection in Dubai is one of the remarkable features of the development in education in the UAE in general, and in Dubai particularly. It is obvious that the government of Dubai is trying its best to provide the educational sector with the best practice of accountability to enhance the quality of education provided in schools. The research has shown that school inspection plays a significant role in improving teaching and learning. This piece of research found that the KHDA shows some element of innovation in running school inspection, by launching the "What Works" event at the end of each academic year, in which it presents the best practise in the inspected schools, and to shift schools from competition to collaboration. Nevertheless, the KHDA as governmental authority pays attention to promote the quality of teaching and learning of the core subjects in general, and Arabic language and Islamic studies in particular, this is very important to protect the identity of the country as Arabic its official language and Islam is the official religion. However, there are still some areas for improvement, it is recommended that the KHDA

encourage schools to conduct an authentic school self-evaluation, KHDA should consider adopting a more 'continuous' type of approach to the inspection in which inspection is broken down into interrelated components as well as further develop the skills and competencies of school inspectors to enhance practice. This research was based on a relatively small sample, further research could be undertaken with a larger sample across public and private schools to have better understanding of the impact of school inspection on teaching and learning.

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