

Unit 2: Inspection and Supervision

INTRODUCTION

As an inspector, you will be involved in the task of inspection and supervision of educational institutions.

In the past, the role of inspectors was perceived as that of policing teachers. Inspectors were seen as fault-finders who were mainly interested in reporting teachers to the Ministry of Education without giving them any advice to enable them to improve their teaching and learning techniques.

It is doubtful if this type of school inspection yielded the required positive results in terms of instructional quality. There is now a movement away from the traditional inspector to that of an advisor/inspector ('adsector').

In addition to conducting formal inspection, the inspectors should give advice and support to teachers and schools for the improvement of teaching and learning.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the terms 'inspection' and 'supervision'
- list the objectives of supervision and inspection
- describe the different types of inspection
- describe the different styles of inspection
- determine the most appropriate style of inspection
- plan for inspection activities
- conduct inspections and give feedback to stakeholders
- explain what the job of inspection and supervision entails.

THE MEANING OF INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION

Inspection and supervision have been defined in several ways.

The Malawi Handbook for Inspectors (1982) defines inspection as:

"...that specific occasion when an educational institution is examined and evaluated as a place of learning in such a way that advice may be given for its improvement..."

Tait (1993) defines it as:

"...the process through which central authority, represented by inspectors, monitors and evaluates the teaching and administration in the schools."

From the two definitions you will notice that inspection has the following characteristics:

- it involves examining and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in the school, based on established criteria
- it is judgemental in nature
- it monitors education trends and standards in institutions
- it checks availability and suitability of the required physical facilities, human resources and instructional materials
- it checks on the social environment of the school

On the other hand, supervision is defined as follows:

“...a process that leads to the improvement of teaching and learning.” (Mogasha and Tsayang, 1990)

“...a constant and continuous process of more personal guidance based on frequent visits when attention is focused on one or more aspects of the educational institution and its organisation.” (Malawi Handbook for Inspectors, 1982)

“Supervision is a process through which supervisors visit schools to work with the teachers and school administrators to ascertain the quality of teaching and administration and to provide advice and guidance to teachers and administrators where it may be necessary.” (Tait, 1993)

You will notice that supervision aims at giving advice, support and direction for the improvement of the following:

- classroom instruction
- teacher performance
- institutional performance.

Supervision is more constant and regular than inspection.

Activity 2a

What are the similarities and differences between inspection and supervision?

COMMENT

You will notice that both inspection and supervision are aimed at teacher and institutional improvement through observation and evaluation.

The main difference is that supervision is more constant and regular than inspection. Supervision is concerned with guiding and advising teachers while inspection is concerned with evaluating adherence to educational standards.

THE PURPOSE OF INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION

Having defined the terms supervision and inspection, let us now consider some of the reasons why inspection and supervision are important.

Some of the reasons are to:

- ensure quality
- improve and maintain standards
- evaluate the performance of teachers and schools
- monitor instruction
- encourage and manage change and development
- identify needs of schools
- collect data
- provide professional development for teachers
- provide advice to schools
- strengthen the supervision of headteachers
- provide feedback to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders.

Activity 2b

List five reasons why schools should be inspected and supervised regularly.

COMMENT

All the reasons given above are designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

TYPES OF INSPECTION

There are many types of inspection. They include:

- **general/full inspection** - entails inspecting aspects of an institution as a place of learning.
- **partial inspection** - it looks at some aspects of the institution.
- **follow-up inspection** - a visit to an institution previously inspected. The main focus of such an inspection is to assess the extent of progress since the initial visit.
- **special inspection/specific enquiry** - may be aimed at fact finding, investigating a problem, confirmation of teachers and settling of disputes.

Note that each of the types of inspection can be conducted through various strategies such as:

- individual inspection - one inspector inspects one school or a series of schools
- team inspection - this is where a team of inspectors inspects a school
- block inspection - "This is a form of inspection carried out in a given district or area by a team of inspectors." (Malawi, Handbook for Inspectors, Ministry of Education, 1982)

Activity 2c

Read the following case studies and decide what type of inspections you would recommend for each.

1. You have been informed that students at a nearby school have boycotted classes in protest against being taught by a certain teacher.
2. Ray School was inspected two months ago. The report contained recommendations for the school to implement. You intend to check on the school.
3. Following an inservice programme for school heads, inspectors have been asked to visit schools to check on the implementation of staff development programmes. In addition to the above assignment you also take the opportunity to observe some social studies lessons.
4. At one of the schools in your district/region, the pupil performance at the end of the academic year was disastrous in that all the candidates failed their final examinations. When the school re-opened, pupils became unruly. They started destroying school property, citing poor teaching and administration as reasons for their action.

COMMENT

As seen in the case studies outlined on page 7, the type of inspection will depend on the objective of the visit to the school. For example, if an inspector visits a school to investigate a specific problem, that is a special inspection or specific enquiry.

STYLES OF INSPECTION

In carrying out inspection activities, a number of styles may be used.

- The styles can be seen to be on a continuum ranging from:
 - 'soft-edged' i.e. little inspection but lots of advice (critical friendship) to 'hard edged' i.e. inspection with no advice to the school but a report is produced on the school.
- The other styles are in between, thus;
 - mentorship, which involves providing professional support to school leaders
 - non-directive, which involves an inspection where advice is given only upon request
 - 'adspection' which is inspection leading to advice.

An appropriate style of inspection should be a combination of inspection and advice characterised by:

- good working relations
- listening
- approachability
- open mindedness
- receptivity
- dialogue
- fairness
- firmness
- analysis
- rigour/thoroughness
- feedback both ways
- problem solving
- reporting with recommendations
- action planning
- expectations of high accountability of schools

Activity 2d

While still a teacher, you were inspected at one time or another.

- (a) What styles of inspection were used then?
- (b) Identify the characteristics of the inspection styles.
- (c) Which style do you think is most appropriate and why?

COMMENT

An appropriate style of inspection should be a combination of inspection and supervision.

ROLES OF INSPECTORS

In your work as an inspector, you are required to perform a number of roles especially aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools and colleges.

Your major roles will be to:

- monitor and evaluate standards
- guide, advise and support teachers
- ensure that the curriculum is effectively implemented and evaluated
- ensure accountability of institutions to the public, government and the pupils
- facilitate and manage educational change.

Activity 2e

List other roles of an inspector and explain how you would get involved in each of them.

COMMENT

Did your list of roles include:

- curriculum development and evaluation?
- staff development/in-service education?
- guidance and counselling?
- examinations?

PLANNING FOR INSPECTION

Before an inspector embarks on an inspection visit, it is important to plan. Planning helps the inspector to focus on the following:

- objectives of the visit
- the type of inspection visit
- resources that are required
- institutions to be inspected
- the programme and time of the inspection visit.

In planning an inspection programme and visit, the following steps should be considered:

- determining the schools that need to be inspected

The inspector may consider the following:

- looking at performance in the final examinations
 - looking at schools that have not been inspected for a long time
 - accessibility of schools
 - schools requesting to be inspected
 - problematic schools.
- Making a schedule for inspection. This will show the dates or months of inspections. Some schools may need to be visited at specific times, for example, during the dry season.
 - Appointing team leaders. During a block or team inspection there will be the need to appoint team leaders. In appointing team leaders care should be taken to match the team leaders with the nature of the institutions to be inspected.

- **Budgeting for the inspection.** For successful inspection programmes, the financial implications should be considered since inspection involves travelling, subsistence and other incidentals.
- **Making a list of the participating inspectors.** A list of participating inspectors will enable the team leader to make necessary preparations.
- **Booking/arranging transport (in writing).** It has to be done in good time. It involves arranging for the appropriate mode of transport.
- **Informing headteachers about the inspection.** There is the need to inform the headteacher about the visit so that he/she makes available all the necessary information for a successful inspection.
- **Requesting for information from the school prior to the visit.**

The following will be required:

- individual timetables for all teachers
- statistical information that can be helpful during the inspection, for example, enrolment, staffing, drop-out rate, examination results/pupils' performance, organisational chart.

This information enables inspectors to programme their visit and manage their time effectively.

- **Checking records of past inspections.** Before embarking on an inspection, it is important to read past inspection reports in order to check on the implementation of previous recommendations. This will help the inspector determine where to start.
- **Booking and confirming accommodation for all participating inspectors.** The team leader should book and confirm the accommodation for all participating inspectors.
- **Calling for a short meeting prior to the visit to brief participating inspectors on the programme and objectives and to allocate duties.** At this stage it is important to brief participating inspectors about survival needs.

Activity 2f

Choose a school which is the furthest from your district/regional office and consider all the preparatory arrangements for a successful inspection visit.

COMMENT

Did you consider:

- time for notifying the school?
- transport and accommodation?
- advance information?
- allocation of duties?
- size of the team?
- objectives of the inspection visit?
- survival needs?

Planning for inspection is a necessary process. It enables one to consider the requirements for successful and purposeful inspections. It enables one to consider constraints and therefore, the means of overcoming them.

CONDUCTING AN INSPECTION

The school visit should not be handled in a haphazard manner. Procedure for the visit needs to be properly planned and set out. The following steps are necessary:

- (i) Meeting the school administration upon arrival at the school. This provides an opportunity for inspectors to introduce themselves and outline the purpose/ aims of the inspection visit. It enables the inspectors to be briefed by the school administration on the school's general status and performance.
- (ii) Familiarisation tour of the school. This is necessary to make inspectors aware of the school's geography and environment and enable them to reach all areas of the school with ease.
- (iii) Introduction to the staff (both teaching and non-teaching) to acquaint them with the purpose of the inspection and help them understand their role in the inspection process.
- (iv) Introduction to students. This is to help them realise that there are other people in the school who are not the usual school community members. This allows information to be given to students about their role in the inspection process and the purpose of the inspection.
- (v) Conducting the inspection. This involves looking at various aspects of a school depending on the nature of the inspection. Below is a list of typical areas of inspection and their guidelines:

- **School Management and Administration**
 - school mission
 - school development plan
 - organisational chart showing the responsibilities of the head, deputy head, teachers and pupils
 - financial management - books of accounts
 - supervision of staff and pupils
 - communication within the school-meetings, school committees, staff manuals, school prospectus
 - records - log book, admission register, punishment book, stock book, transfer book, staff list and visitors' book.
 - school curriculum and timetable
- **Classroom Observation**
 - class time-table and rota
 - class register
 - pupils' progress chart
 - school rules/safety rules that are subject specific
 - teaching aids and their appropriateness
 - schemes of work, record of work and teaching plans
 - lesson presentation
 - pupils' work including assignments, their marking and frequency
 - class inventory/stock books
 - remedial records

- **Relationships Within The School Community**
 - pupil to pupil
 - teacher to pupil
 - teacher to teacher
 - teacher and administration
 - teacher and support staff
 - school and community (catchment area)
 - support staff to administration and pupils
 - administration to support staff and pupils

- **Departmental Organisation**
 - departmental staffing
 - planning, organisation and management
 - resources - books and equipment
 - pupil performance charts
 - essential documents - syllabus, schemes of work, records of work, reference materials
 - departmental records: schedule of meetings, minutes of meetings, decisions made, constraints
 - team work/spirit

- **Physical Infrastructures**
 - signposts and notices
 - general school upkeep
 - adequacy and appropriateness of structures such as toilets, classrooms, specialist rooms, (kitchen, laboratories, library), sporting facilities, teacher accommodation, office accommodation

- **School Tone**
 - pupils' discipline and appearance
 - teachers' attitude to work
 - appearance of the school surroundings
 - the general mood of the school

- (vi) Holding departmental meetings to inform teachers of the inspectors' findings in the specialist areas.
- (vii) A meeting by the inspection team to consolidate its findings regarding the general impression on the tone, management, quality of teaching and learning and to formulate recommendations.
- (viii) A meeting with the headteacher to report on the main observations and recommendations.
- (ix) A meeting with the teaching staff to report on the main observations and recommendations and to respond to any questions they may have.

Activity 2g

You are part of a team of inspectors that conducted a full inspection of a school.

How would you draw conclusions about the school?

COMMENT

In order to reach an objective judgement/assessment about educational standards, a comprehensive audit of all aspects of an institution is essential.

After conducting a full inspection, the inspection team will need to meet in order to discuss the findings and arrive at joint conclusions.

The collective manner of arriving at conclusions brings about reliability and validity of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you should have learnt:

- the meaning/purpose of inspection and supervision
- the types and styles of inspection
- the roles of inspectors
- planning for inspection
- procedures for conducting an inspection.

The aim of inspection and supervision is to improve and maintain quality of teaching and learning.

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