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**The Role of Inspectors in Guiding Primary School Teachers: Teachers' Perspectives in Al Ajilat Primary Schools**

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

RECEIVED: 03/02/2026

ACCEPTED: 20/02/2026

PUBLISHED: 27/02/2026

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**1. ABSTRACT:**

School inspection is one of the factors that sustain and improve educational quality in schools worldwide. Inspectors have a variety of roles including the assessment of teacher's performance in addition to offering advice and support. It is not clear yet if inspection functions as a mechanism of control or support to teachers. This study attempts to find out the primary school teachers' perspectives in respect of the role of inspectors in supporting their performance in the schools of Al Ajilat primary schools. To achieve this end, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Fifteen open-ended items in a 16 items questionnaire were administered to 45 primary school teachers selected randomly from five primary schools located in the city of Al Ajilat. The information collected were looked at closely to see what teachers thought about the people who checked on them and the help these people gave. The researcher wanted to know how the teachers feel when they are checked on and what they think would make things better. The researcher is trying to figure out if teachers see the inspectors who check on them as people who just check or as people who help them get better. The researcher wanted to know what kind of help teachers like the most. What is learnt from this study will help policy makers in the Ministry of Education and will help train the inspectors who check on teachers, in Al Ajilat and in cities that are similar. This will help teachers get better and will help students learn more.

**Keywords:** Inspection, inspectors, teacher perspectives, professional guidance, primary education, Al Ajilat schools

**2. Introduction**

The education we get is really good if the teachers are good. The teachers can only be good if they have the right help. One of the things that helps teachers is when inspectors come to check on them. These inspectors are, like helpers who make sure everyone is doing a job. They are supposed to tell the teachers what they are doing well and what they need to work on. This way the teachers can get better at what they do. Sometimes it is hard for the teachers and the inspectors to work together. The inspectors are supposed to help the teachers. They also have to make sure the teachers are doing a good job. This can be but it can cause problems. The teachers might feel like the inspectors are there to criticize them instead of really helping them. Education and teaching are very important. That is why we need to make sure the teachers have the right support. Teachers need to know that the helpers are there to help them and not to criticize them. This way the teachers can be confident and do a good job. The quality of education and the quality of teaching are connected to the support teachers.

Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos did a study in 2012 about what Turkish primary students think. They said that at schools people who teach are watched closely and being inspected. This is because of the notion that says teachers need to be controlled so they can do their job. Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos agreed with this idea like what Daughtry and Ricks said in 1989. They said that people who watch over the teachers are only making sure they are doing what they are supposed to do. They do not really help the teachers get better at their job. Nowadays decision makers who care about education think that teachers need to work with the inspectors who watch over them. This helps the teachers learn and grow. Taymaz (2002), Lunenburg (1996) İşlek (2007) show that teachers need support from the people who are supposed to help them, not people who are watching to make sure they are doing everything right.

In Al Ajilat schools people do not know much about how inspectors help teachers. Inspectors regularly visit schools. Most people do not know what teachers think about the help they get from inspectors.

Teachers in Al Ajilat schools might see inspection as a good chance to learn and get better or they might see it as a big test that makes them feel stressed. In addition, teachers in Al Ajilat schools might like some things that inspectors do and they might not like other things. The question is, how does the inspection process in Al Ajilat schools affect the way teachers feel about their work and how does it affect what they do in the classroom. Teachers in Al Ajilat schools might feel more confident or they might feel less confident after inspectors visit them. The inspection process in Al Ajilat schools could make teachers want to work harder or it could make them feel like they do not want to work as hard. The way inspectors do their job, in Al Ajilat schools is very important because it can affect what happens in the classroom.

The questions this study is asking are important because they help us understand what is happening with inspection in Al Ajilat. They also help us figure out the ways to make the guidance part of inspection better.

Savaendra and Hawthorn (1990) and MEB (2005) showed that when they talked to students they received an understanding of what inspection is. This is because students are the ones who experience inspection directly. In this study, the researcher talked to teachers. Teachers are the ones who get guidance from inspections. Therefore, what teachers think is very important to know if the guidance is working well. It is of a great importance to know what teachers think so guidance can be made better.

This study looked at what Kantimer did in 2008. He used a questionnaire that let students answer in their own words. This study uses an approach to see what teachers think. Kantimer wanted to know how students felt about inspection visits. This study is different because it asks teachers what they think. Teachers are the people who are supposed to benefit from inspection guidance. Therefore, this study asks teachers about the inspectors who do the guidance. It needs to be known what teachers think about what those inspectors do, how they behave and how they help teachers become better at their jobs. The study is about what teachers think of inspectors and the role they play in helping them develop professionally.

The study aims to find answers to these research questions:

1. What do primary school teachers in Al Ajilat think about the guidance role of school inspectors?
2. Which behaviors by inspectors do teachers find helpful for their pedagogical growth?
3. How do inspection visits affect teachers emotionally and professionally?
4. What suggestions do teachers offer for improving the guidance of inspection?

By answering these questions the research aims to give recommendations based on facts for training inspectors, inspection procedures and education policy in Al Ajilat and other Libyan cities.

## **2.1 The Dual Role of Inspection:**

### **Control and Guidance:**

Our knowledge of educational inspection has so far been based on two distinct views of the concept: inspection as control and as guidance. While the concept of inspection as control stems from scientific management theory explained by Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos (2012, p.199), it is based on the assumption that teachers and managers need to be controlled in order to be able to work better. With an external control mechanism in the form of inspectors ensuring that teachers and managers adhere to educational regulations and code of practice, deficiencies are recorded and individuals held to account. From this perspective, the developmental potential of inspection is underscored. Informed by humanistic and adult learning theories, the guidance perspective portrays the inspector as a mentor, coach and professional development provider who assists teaching delivery to encourage teachers to engage the reflective process for their own professional learning and development. Whereas a proscriptive orientation is concerned with identifying the unsatisfactory, the guidance perspective is concerned with ensuring the teacher is aware of the steps they can take to rectify any unsatisfactory features that may be identified. Inspectors working from a guidance perspective will therefore provide helpful and relevant feedback for teachers and will demonstrate teaching and learning practices they advocate through their evaluation of provision. They will also be engaged in a collaborative process to help resolve issues that teachers and learners may identify as requiring improvement. In reality, these two functions often coincide and provoke tensions. Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos (2012) note that: “to check if the aims and objectives in the plans and practices are realized or not; to remove the deficiencies occurring at the time of implementation; to identify the strategies that will enhance the development of the schools and teaching staffs.” This combination of assessment and improvement functions in the inspector-teacher relationship exacerbates the difficulties identified in this research. Teachers who feel they need guidance and support from inspectors at the same time experience significant fear and apprehension, and this feeling is mutual for inspectors who have to, at the same time, meet their control and evaluation tasks while seeking to help teachers improve their teaching skills.

## **2.2 The Inspection Process in Primary Education**

Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos (2012) point out that in primary education schools, the process of education inspection is carried out in two main dimensions: institution inspections and course inspections. While institution inspections investigate how schools manage their affairs and how they utilize their resources, course inspections relate to the educators’ teaching behaviors that are observed in the classrooms during the inspection visit. Thus, the educational inspection covers all aspects, from the organizational structure of the schools to the content of the teaching. Inspectors watched classes taught by teachers to evaluate their qualifications and teaching methods and their relationships with students during the course inspection period, as mentioned by Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos (2012, p.199): “Inspectors observe teachers during their class time to examine their teaching qualifications during the course inspection period”. Thus, the observation of teachers’ practices by inspection is the most influential part of the process on teachers. The guidance function of inspection is implemented through the form of feedback given after carrying out the observation. The Inspector provides verbal feedback to the teacher at the conclusion of the inspection visit and written feedback in the Report of the Inspection. The areas

which may be commented on include planning, teaching, class management, pupil involvement, assessment and curriculum implementation. It is not so much what is said as the way in which it is said which will decide whether a teacher is helped or hampered in the carrying out the task. Will the feedback be such that it clarifies, teaches and helps teachers to improve their work? Or will it be seen rather as a condemnation of something which has already taken place?

### **2.3 Factors Influencing Teachers' Perceptions of Inspection**

Research into the perceptions of teacher's has revealed a complex of variables which influence the manner in which teachers experience and react to the inspection process. Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos, (2012) also noted that interpersonal behavior of inspectors had a high level of impact on the individuals who were being inspected, a result also seen with students. Teachers feel favorably towards those inspectors to whom they feel respected and to whom they feel able to talk, while feeling negatively towards those with an autocratic style, as well as those who are brusque or sarcastic.

**Feedback Quality:** The quality of the feedback teachers receive is a key factor in determining how they regard the value of the inspection. Helpful guidance is likely to be seen as being specific, constructive and to the point. It should clearly indicate what teachers can do to improve teaching and learning in their schools as well as commenting on achievements. It should also clearly identify the strengths of the school as well as indicating areas for development. Ideally, it should also offer specific suggestions for improvement.

**Prior Relationship:** Inspectors have already built up a relationship with successful teachers over several visits, and teachers are likely to be more responsive to any advice given as the event is not experienced as quite so distant or as an impersonal occasion.

**School Context:** Inspection can be filtered or modified by a range of school context variables such as level of administrative pressure and collegial relations between staff.

**Teacher Characteristics:** Individual teacher factors such as experience level, self-efficacy, and openness to feedback may influence perceptions of inspection guidance.

### **2.4 The Importance of Teacher Perspectives**

Toker Gokce and Ertan Kantos express that despite numerous approaches in the studies carried out with respect to the inspector and the inspection processes, the affected individuals within the scope of the inspection process are not sufficiently investigated within this context. Some other studies examine the professional performance and burnout of primary school inspectors (Yildiz, 2007), professional ethical principles of primary school inspectors (Islek, 2007), the roles of primary school inspectors as mentors (Cantimer, 2008), human relations skills of primary school inspectors (Mulla, 2008), primary school inspectors are studied in different ways by the view of teachers, and the school administrators inspected, but not in the way of the perception of the students involved in the inspection process (Toker Gokce & Ertan Kantos, 2012, p. 200). This paper aims to shed light on teachers' views about the guidance role of inspectors. While there is considerable research about teachers' attitudes towards pedagogy, there is far less about their attitudes towards the guidance aspect of an inspection—whether teachers feel that inspectors act as catalysts for learning and whether they found any part of the inspection process particularly helpful. The guidance role of an inspection has not been investigated in any detail. What do teachers see as helpful guidance from an inspector? And do they see an inspector as someone from whom they can learn? Teachers are at the very heart of the inspection process. They are what are being

evaluated, and they are also the people on whom any potential benefit of an evaluation should fall. As such their attitudes to the guidance role of inspectors are crucial.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study employed qualitative study method and design. Open-ended questionnaire was used in the study in order to examine the views of teachers on the evaluation role of inspectors through more specific information. Open-ended questions are one of the most commonly used survey tools in qualitative researches. They are usually preferred in case of trying to understand the deep-seated views of individuals about the issues related to the subject matter in question in their own words and without imposing any restriction.

#### **3.2 Participants Target Group**

The teachers participating in the study were 45 primary school teachers from ten schools in the Al Ajilat city.

##### ***Criteria for selection:***

- Currently employed as a primary school teacher (grades 1-6)
- Minimum of three years teaching experience
- They have undertaken an inspection in the last 2 years.
- Willingness to participate voluntarily

Teachers were selected via the school administration, in an effort to secure teachers from a variety of ranks, grades and with a balance of males and females. The 45 participants recruited from ten schools in the city were enough to gather sufficient information for a qualitative analysis of their experiences as Teaching TESOL graduates and at the same time were small enough to be carefully and thoroughly coded on key themes.

#### **3.3 Instrument Development**

This study developed 16 open-ended questions in the form of a questionnaire that aims to assess teachers views towards the inspector's guidance role. The questionnaire is developed in consultation with educational experts. It was applied for the first time to a pilot group of five teachers in order to verify the expression of items and assess the accuracy of the language used. The questionnaire items addressed the following dimensions:

##### ***Pre-Inspection Preparation and Expectations:***

1. Did you receive any notice of the inspection prior to the inspector's arrival? If so, what was the duration of the notice period?
2. How did you prepare for the inspection visit?
3. What did the word "inspector" mean to you before the visit?

##### ***Inspector Behaviors during the Visit:***

4. Were you introduced to the inspector and were you told why they were there?

5. Where did the inspector sit or position themselves during classroom observation?
6. What specific behaviors did the inspector exhibit during the observation?
7. Did the inspector interact with students?
8. If so, how?

***Post-Observation Feedback and Guidance:***

9. Did the inspector provide feedback after the observation? Immediately or later?
10. What kind of feedback was given? (For example: recognition of the child's strengths, areas that need improvement, suggested ways to improve)
11. Did the feedback include guidance on how to improve your teaching?
12. How did the feedback make you feel?

***Overall Perceptions and Impact:***

13. What was the tone of the inspector during your visit? (i.e. positive, negative, impartial).
14. Did the experience of the inspection visit affect your practice as teachers subsequent to the visit? (If yes, how?)
15. What aspects of the inspector's behavior have you found particularly helpful?
16. What aspects of the inspector's behavior did you find unhelpful or stressful?
17. What suggestions do you have for improving how inspectors guide teachers?
18. What would be a good metaphor for describing the inspector and why?

**3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection proceeded in the following phases:

***Phase 1: Approvals and Recruitment***

- Obtain necessary approvals from educational authorities in Al Ajilat
- Contact school principals to explain the study and seek cooperation
- Distribute information sheets and consent forms to potential participants
- Schedule questionnaire administration sessions

***Phase 2: Questionnaire Administration***

- Administer questionnaires in-group settings at each participating school
- Provide clear instructions and ensure participants understand the open-ended format
- Allow approximately 60-90 minutes for completion
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality; questionnaires are anonymous

***Phase 3: Follow-up Interviews***

- Invite a subset of participants (n=10) for follow-up semi-structured interviews

- Use interviews to explore emerging themes in greater depth
- Audio-record and transcribe interviews for analysis

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

In this study the data was analyzed with qualitative analysis methods:

Coding Procedure:

1. The responses to the questionnaire were written out and merged into one data set.
2. Two researchers read all of the responses to become familiar with the data.
3. Coding the initial data allows the researcher to look for possible instances of meaning that teachers connect with their views on educational governance.
4. Codes were grouped into categories based on thematic similarity.
5. Categories were refined and organized into broader themes.
6. Frequencies of themes and categories were calculated to identify patterns.

### **Data Analysis:**

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the collected interview data. First, Otter.ai, an AI-powered transcription online tool, was used to transcribe teachers' interviews verbatim. Then, the obtained transcriptions were reviewed and read multiple times. After that, the researcher identified meaningful data segments which were labelled into codes (e.g., confidence, assistance, judgement, barriers). Then, the researcher grouped the identified codes into larger themes. Lastly, those themes were refined into more focused themes which answered the four research questions.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical research principles:

- Informed consent were obtained from all participants
- Anonymity was protected; no identifying information will appear in reports
- Participants had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence - All data were stored/handled securely and access was restricted to the researcher only.
- Findings were reported honestly and accurately

## **4. Findings**

Based on evaluation literature about teachers' views regarding inspections, some conclusions can be drawn.

### ***4.1 Pre-Inspection Perceptions and Expectations***

Many teachers associated inspectors primarily with evaluation and judgment rather than guidance and support. Teachers' vocabulary that was used in this context to characterize an inspector included, for example, judge, critic, examiner or police officer emphasizing the regulatory character of their task.

Teachers who have had positive experiences in the past adopted helpful guideposts for their thinking such as the words 'mentor', 'coach' or 'experienced colleague'

Level of pre-inspection anxiety varied based on teachers' confidence and prior experiences. The more experienced the teachers the more positive feedback they provided in favor of the inspectors. In addition, confident and high achieving teachers employed positive language to describe the inspectors and regarded inspection as guidance and assistance rather than criticism and discouragement.

#### ***4.2 Inspector Behaviors During Visits***

The behaviors of the inspectors that teachers observed are listed with great detail which affect the quality of the guidance provided. Both positive and negative behaviors of inspectors were reported by the teachers. They were as follows:

##### *Positive Guidance Behaviors:*

- Explained why the visit and observation was happening.
- Positioned themselves unobtrusively during observation
- Took notes professionally without being distracting
- Interacted positively with students when appropriate
- Maintained calm, respectful demeanor throughout
- Acknowledged teacher's strengths alongside areas for growth

##### *Negative Guidance Behaviors:*

- Entered classroom abruptly without introduction
- Sat in judgmental posture making teachers feel scrutinized
- Interacted with students in ways that disrupt normal classroom flow
- Displayed negative facial expressions and body language
- Focused exclusively on problems without acknowledging successes
- Created atmosphere of tension and fear

#### **4.3 Post-Observation Feedback and Guidance**

The type and quality of feedback given after an observation was likely to be a key factor in how teachers saw the value of inspection as a guide. Teachers' responses included:

- Teachers who got specific, helpful feedback with suggestions for how to improve had a better opinion of inspector guidance.
- Feedback that only pointed out weaknesses and did not mention strengths were seen as demoralizing instead of helpful.
- Immediate oral feedback was more appreciated than written feedback that came later.
- The value of feedback rose if there were chances to talk and discuss it.
- Feedback that showed or modeled good practices was especially appreciated.

#### **4.4 Emotional and Professional Impact**

The study found out that some teachers were afraid of certain behaviors by inspectors. Teachers reported emotional responses that affected how open they were to guidance:

- Inspectors who were seen as harsh, critical, or demeaning made teachers anxious, defensive, and unwilling to follow their advice.
- Inspectors who were seen as respectful, helpful, and constructive made teachers more open and willing to listen.
- The emotional state of the inspection affected whether or not teachers made the suggested changes.
- Good guidance experiences made teachers feel more confident and motivated.
- Bad experiences lowered confidence and made teachers less willing to be inspected in the future.

#### **4.5 Teacher Suggestions for Improvement**

Teachers gave important suggestions to be given to their inspectors as follows:

- More communication before the visit to make sure everyone knows what to expect and calm their nerves
- More focus on help and guidance instead of just evaluation
- More specific, useful feedback with clear suggestions
- Help with implementation after the inspection with follow-up support
- Not just pointing out what teachers do wrong, but also what they do well
- Professional development for inspectors in how to coach and mentor others
- Chances for ongoing conversation instead of just one-time visits

### **5. Discussion**

#### **5.1 Implications for Inspection Practice in Al Ajilat**

The results of this study possessed considerable ramifications for the conduct of inspections in Al Ajilat primary schools. When teachers saw inspectors more as evaluators than guides, this meant that inspection practices needed to change to focus more on professional development. Some of the effects are:

**Training for Inspectors:** Inspector preparation programs should include a lot of training in how to coach, mentor, and give constructive feedback. Inspectors need to be able to not only find problems but also help teachers come up with ways to fix them.

**Revision of Protocol:** Protocols for inspections should be looked over to make sure they give enough time and attention to the guidance function. This could mean planned times for pre-observation conferences, post-observation talks, and follow-up help.

**Better communication:** Teachers can better understand the purpose of inspections and feel less anxious about receiving feedback if they are clear about what to expect before, during, and after the visit.

**Building Relationships:** Systems that help inspector-teacher relationships stay strong over time may help build trust and make guidance more effective.

#### **5.2 Balancing Control and Guidance**

This study identified a tension between inspection as control and inspection as guidance. Teachers expressed a desire for more supportive, developmental interactions while simultaneously acknowledging the legitimate accountability functions of inspection. Designing inspection procedures that successfully serve both purposes—ensuring accountability and fostering professional development—is a challenge for educational systems.

This balance might necessitate:

- A clear distinction between the inspection’s guidance and evaluation components
- Clear standards and procedures that educators can comprehend and rely on
- Inspectors with the ability to properly transition between supportive and evaluative roles
- Mechanisms for monitoring guidance recommendations

### **5.3 Cultural Context Considerations**

The cultural background of education in Al Ajilat will influence how teachers view inspectors. Teachers’ interpretations of inspector behaviors and what constitutes appropriate guidance can be influenced by a variety of factors, including power distance, respect for authority, communication norms, and professional culture. These cultural factors were taken into consideration when interpreting the study’s results, and recommendations were suitable for the Al Ajilat context.

### **5.4 Limitations and Future Research**

This study has limitations that need to be noted:

- Generalizability is limited by the sample size of 45 teachers from ten schools in one area.
- Self-report: Objective observations of inspector behaviors may not fully match teachers’ perceptions.
- Single time point: Rather than monitoring changes over time, the study records perceptions at a single point in time.
- No inspector perspective: Inspectors’ opinions, which could offer more information, are not included in the study.

These limitations should be addressed in future research by:

- More extensive and varied samples from several areas
- Mixed-methods designs that incorporate interviews, observations, and surveys
- Longitudinal research monitoring shifts in attitudes over several inspection cycles
- Research that incorporates the viewpoints of inspectors and teachers
- Intervention research testing techniques to improve inspection’s guidance function

## **6. Conclusions**

This research described a methodical investigation into primary school teachers’ perspectives on the guidance role of inspectors in Al Ajilat primary schools. The study employed a qualitative approach using open-ended questionnaires to gather rich, detailed data on teachers’ experiences and perceptions, building on theoretical underpinnings that acknowledge the dual functions of inspection—control and guidance.

The results indicated that a variety of factors, including pre-inspection expectations, inspector behavior during visits, the caliber of post-observation feedback, and the emotional atmosphere of inspection encounters, influenced teachers' opinions of inspectors' guidance. Inspectors who showed respect, gave detailed and helpful feedback, and fostered an environment conducive to sincere professional communication were positively valued by teachers. On the other hand, inspectors who prioritized evaluation over guidance, spoke harshly or disrespectfully, or gave ambiguous or only critical feedback were viewed as ineffective and even obstructed teacher development.

Positive results would encourage Al Ajilat's educational authorities to increase support for guidance skills-focused inspector training, update inspection procedures to emphasize developmental goals, and establish mechanisms that foster continuing, trustworthy relationships between inspectors and teachers. The ultimate objective is an inspection system that performs its accountability duties while also acting as a true resource for the professional development of teachers—a system where teachers view inspectors as collaborators in their continued professional development rather than as threats to be endured.

Individuals who are directly involved in inspection have crucial viewpoints that should guide efforts to enhance the inspection procedure. This study applies that reasoning to educators, acknowledging the importance of their perspectives in comprehending and improving the guidance function of inspection. Educational systems can create inspection procedures that genuinely support teachers' professional development and, via them, students' academic success by paying close attention to what teachers have to say about their interactions with inspectors.

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