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

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**1. ABSTRACT:**

School inspection is recognized as a factor to maintain and improve educational quality across schools worldwide. Inspectors implement several roles such as evaluating teachers' performance and providing professional guidance. However, it is unclear whether inspection practices function as mechanisms of control or as sources of support for teachers. This study aims to explore primary school teachers' perspectives on the role of inspectors in supporting their professional performance in schools located in Al Ajilat. The study adopts a qualitative approach. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of primary 12 school teachers. The interviews explored teachers' experiences, perceptions and responses regarding inspection practices. The data were analysed using Thematic Analysis to identify themes related to the perceived roles of inspectors, the nature of support and the challenges faced by teachers. The findings provide deeper insights into how teachers interpret inspection practices and highlight the need to balance supportive roles to enhance teacher performance and professional development.

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

**2. Introduction**

The quality of education is linked to the quality of teaching and effective teaching largely depends on the support provided to teachers. One of the mechanisms for supporting teachers' professional development is school inspection. Inspectors play an important role in evaluating teachers' performance and providing guidance to improve instructional practices. Therefore, inspection should function as a supportive process that helps teachers identify their strengths and areas for improvement. However, the relationship between teachers and inspectors is often complex (Baxter, 2013). Inspectors are expected to perform dual roles: they must ensure accountability by evaluating teachers' performance while also providing professional support and guidance. This dual responsibility can create tension, as teachers may perceive inspectors not as supportive figures but as evaluators or critics. Such perceptions can negatively influence teachers' confidence and willingness to engage with feedback.

Previous research has highlighted this issue. For example, Toker Gökçe and Ertan Kantos (2012) found that inspection practices are often associated with control and supervision, reflecting the traditional view that teachers need to be monitored to ensure effectiveness. This perspective aligns with earlier work by Daughtry and Ricks (1989), who emphasized the regulatory function of supervision rather than its developmental role. In such cases, inspection is primarily concerned with ensuring compliance rather than fostering professional growth. In contrast, more recent educational perspectives emphasize the importance of collaboration between teachers and inspectors. Scholars such as Taymaz (2002), Lunenburg and Ornstein (1996) and İşlek (2007) argue that inspectors should act as mentors and facilitators who support teachers' professional development rather than merely monitoring their performance. This shift reflects a broader movement in education toward supportive and developmental supervision models.

Despite these theoretical developments, there is limited research on how inspection is perceived in specific local contexts, such as Al Ajilat primary schools. Although inspectors regularly visit schools in this area, little is known about how teachers perceive their role and the type of support they receive. Teachers may view inspection either as an opportunity for professional growth or as a stressful experience associated with evaluation and judgment. These differing perceptions can influence teachers' motivation, confidence and classroom practices. Understanding teachers' perspectives is therefore essential. Inspection practices can have both positive and negative effects on teachers, depending on how they are implemented. Supportive and constructive inspection can enhance teachers' confidence and encourage professional development, whereas negative experiences may lead to anxiety, reduced motivation, and resistance to feedback.

The importance of examining stakeholders' perspectives has been emphasized in previous studies. Savaendra and Hawthorn (1990) and MEB (2005) highlighted that individuals directly involved in the inspection process provide valuable insights into its effectiveness. While some studies have focused on students' perceptions, this study shifts the focus to teachers, who are the primary recipients of inspection guidance. Teachers' views are crucial for evaluating whether inspection practices successfully fulfill their developmental function. Furthermore, this study builds on the work of Cantimer (2008), who explored perceptions of inspection using open-ended responses. Unlike previous research that focused on students, the present study investigates teachers' perspectives, as they are the professionals directly affected by inspection practices. It seeks to understand how teachers perceive inspectors' behaviors, the nature of the guidance they receive, and the extent to which inspection contributes to their professional development.

The study aims to find answers to these research questions:

1. How do primary school teachers in Al Ajilat perceive the role of inspectors in providing professional guidance and support?
2. How do inspection practices (including inspector behaviors and feedback) affect teachers' professional development, emotional responses, and what improvements do teachers suggest?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Dual Role of Inspection: Control and Guidance**

Educational inspection has traditionally been understood through two dominant perspectives: inspection as control and inspection as guidance. The control-oriented perspective is rooted in scientific management theory, which assumes that teachers and school administrators require monitoring to ensure effective performance (Toker Gökçe & Ertan Kantos, 2012). Within this framework, inspectors act as external authorities who ensure compliance with educational policies and standards, identify deficiencies, and hold teachers accountable for their performance. This approach emphasizes regulation and evaluation rather than professional development.

In contrast, the guidance-oriented perspective is informed by humanistic and adult learning theories, which emphasize professional growth, reflection, and collaboration. From this viewpoint, inspectors function as mentors, coaches, and facilitators who support teachers in improving their instructional practices (Taymaz, 2002; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). Rather than focusing solely on identifying weaknesses, inspectors adopting this approach provide constructive feedback, model effective teaching strategies, and engage teachers in reflective dialogue to enhance their professional development.

Despite these differing perspectives, inspection in practice often involves a combination of both roles. As noted by Toker Gökçe and Ertan Kantos (2012), inspection aims not only to assess whether educational objectives are being achieved but also to identify areas for improvement and propose strategies for development. However, this dual function can create tension in the inspector–teacher relationship. Teachers who seek support and guidance may simultaneously experience anxiety and fear due to the evaluative nature of inspection. Similarly, inspectors must balance their responsibilities as both evaluators and facilitators, which can complicate their interactions with teachers. This inherent tension highlights the need to better understand how inspection practices are perceived and experienced by teachers.

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

In primary education, inspection is generally conducted across two main dimensions: institutional inspection and classroom (course) inspection (Toker Gökçe & Ertan Kantos, 2012). Institutional inspection focuses on the overall functioning of the school, including management practices, resource utilization, and organizational effectiveness. In contrast, classroom inspection involves direct observation of teachers' instructional practices, including their teaching methods, classroom management, and interactions with students.

Classroom observation is widely considered the most influential component of the inspection process, as it directly evaluates teachers' professional practices. During these observations, inspectors assess various aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning, instructional delivery, student engagement, assessment methods, and curriculum implementation (Toker Gökçe & Ertan Kantos, 2012). Following the observation, inspectors typically provide feedback in both verbal and written forms.

The quality and delivery of this feedback play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of inspection as a guidance tool. Constructive feedback that is clear, specific, and supportive can help teachers improve their practices and develop professionally. Conversely, feedback that is vague, overly critical, or delivered in a negative manner may discourage teachers and hinder their development. Therefore, it is not only the content of the feedback that matters but also the manner in which it is communicated. Effective inspection requires feedback that promotes learning, reflection, and improvement rather than simply highlighting deficiencies.

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

Teachers' perceptions of inspection are shaped by multiple interacting factors, which influence how they experience and respond to the process. One of the most significant factors is the interpersonal behavior of inspectors. Research indicates that teachers respond more positively to inspectors who demonstrate respect, professionalism, and effective communication skills, while negative perceptions are associated with authoritarian or insensitive behavior (Toker Gökçe & Ertan Kantos, 2012).

Another critical factor is the quality of feedback provided during the inspection process. Effective feedback is typically characterized as specific, constructive, and actionable. It should highlight both strengths and areas for improvement, while offering practical suggestions that teachers can implement in their classrooms. When feedback is balanced and supportive, teachers are more likely to perceive inspection as beneficial to their professional growth.

The prior relationship between inspectors and teachers also plays an important role. Teachers who have established positive relationships with inspectors over time are more likely to trust their feedback and engage with the guidance provided. In contrast, impersonal or unfamiliar interactions may reduce the effectiveness of inspection.

In addition, school context can influence how inspection is perceived. Factors such as administrative pressure, school culture, and collegial relationships among staff can shape teachers' attitudes toward inspection. For example, a supportive school environment may enhance the positive impact of inspection, while a stressful or highly controlled environment may amplify negative perceptions.

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

Although a substantial body of research has examined educational inspection, relatively little attention has been given to the perspectives of those directly affected by it—particularly teachers. Previous studies have explored various aspects of inspection, such as inspectors' professional performance and burnout (Yıldız, 2007), ethical principles (İşlek, 2007), mentoring roles (Cantimer, 2008), and interpersonal skills (Mulla, 2008). However, these studies often focus on inspectors themselves or on administrative perspectives rather than on teachers' experiences.

Toker Gökçe and Ertan Kantos (2012) argue that the individuals most directly involved in the inspection process are not sufficiently represented in the literature. While some research has examined students' perceptions of inspection, there remains a significant gap in understanding how teachers perceive the guidance role of inspectors. This gap is important, as teachers are both the subjects of evaluation and the primary beneficiaries of any developmental support provided through inspection.

Understanding teachers' perspectives is therefore essential for evaluating the effectiveness of inspection practices. Teachers' attitudes toward inspectors influence their willingness to accept feedback, engage in reflective practice, and implement suggested improvements. If inspection is perceived as supportive and constructive, it can serve as a powerful tool for professional development. However, if it is perceived as punitive or judgmental, it may hinder teacher growth and reduce the effectiveness of the inspection process.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore primary school teachers' perspectives on the guidance role of inspectors in Al Ajilat. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in their own words.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method. This method provides flexibility, enabling participants to express their views freely while allowing the researcher to probe deeper into relevant issues. It is particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena such as teachers' perceptions of inspection practices and the nature of professional support provided by inspectors.

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

The participants in this study consisted of 12 primary school teachers from five schools in Al Ajilat. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience with school inspection.

The selection criteria were as follows:

- Currently employed as a primary school teacher (Grades 1–6)
- Minimum of three years of teaching experience
- Experience of at least one inspection visit within the last two years
- Willingness to participate voluntarily

Participants were recruited through school administrations to ensure diversity in terms of teaching experience, grade levels, and gender. The sample size was considered adequate for qualitative research, as it allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data while remaining manageable for in-depth thematic analysis.

#### **3.3 Instrument Development**

The study utilized a semi-structured interview designed to explore teachers' views on inspectors' guidance role. The interview questions were developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature, and were reviewed in consultation with educational experts to ensure content validity.

A pilot study was conducted with five teachers to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and wording of the questions. Based on the feedback received, minor revisions were made to improve the accuracy and comprehensibility of the instrument.

The interview questions were organized into four main categories:

##### **1. Pre-Inspection Preparation and Expectations**

Explored teachers' prior understanding of inspection and their preparation for inspection visits.

## **2. Inspector Behaviors During the Visit**

Examined how inspectors conducted classroom observations, including their behavior, positioning, and interaction with students.

## **3. Post-Observation Feedback and Guidance**

Focused on the type, timing, and quality of feedback provided by inspectors, as well as its perceived usefulness.

## **4. Overall Perceptions and Impact**

Investigated teachers' emotional responses, perceived impact on professional practice, and suggestions for improving inspection practices.

This structure ensured comprehensive coverage of the key aspects of inspection aligned with the study's research questions.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was carried out in three main phases:

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

- Official approval was obtained from the relevant educational authorities in Al Ajilat
- School principals were contacted to explain the purpose of the study and gain access
- Information sheets and consent forms were distributed to potential participants
- Interview sessions were scheduled in coordination with participating schools

#### **Phase 2: Interview Administration**

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted in group settings within each school
- Clear instructions were provided to ensure participants' understanding of the questions
- Each session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes
- Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the process

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

- A subset of participants (n = 12) was selected for follow-up interviews
- These interviews aimed to explore emerging themes in greater depth
- Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is suitable for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data.

The analysis followed several systematic steps:

1. All interview responses were transcribed and compiled into a single dataset.
2. The researcher and an additional coder read the data multiple times to gain familiarity.

3. Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments related to teachers' perceptions and experiences (e.g., confidence, support, judgment, challenges).
4. Codes were grouped into categories based on similarities.
5. Categories were further refined into broader themes.
6. The frequency of themes was examined to identify recurring patterns across participants.

To support the transcription process, **Otter.ai** was used to generate verbatim transcripts of the interviews. These transcripts were carefully reviewed and checked for accuracy before analysis.

The final themes were aligned with the study's research questions, focusing on:

- teachers' perceptions of inspectors' roles
- the nature and quality of guidance provided
- the challenges and emotional impact of inspection practices

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to established ethical research principles throughout all stages of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring that they were fully aware of the purpose of the study and their role in it. Participation was entirely voluntary.

To protect participants' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. No identifying information was included in the data or in the final report. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

All data were stored securely, and access was restricted to the researcher only. Additionally, the findings of the study were reported honestly and accurately, without any fabrication or misrepresentation of the data.

## **4. Findings**

The findings of this study are presented thematically based on the analysis of teachers' responses. The themes reflect teachers' perceptions, experiences, and evaluations of inspection practices, in line with the study's research objectives.

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

The findings revealed that many teachers initially associated inspectors with evaluation and judgment rather than guidance and professional support. Teachers frequently used terms such as *judge*, *critic*, *examiner*, and *police officer*, highlighting the regulatory and controlling image of inspectors.

However, teachers who had previously experienced supportive inspection practices tended to use more positive descriptors, such as *mentor*, *coach*, or *experienced colleague*. This suggests that prior experiences significantly shape teachers' perceptions of inspection.

The level of pre-inspection anxiety varied among participants and was influenced by factors such as teaching experience and self-confidence. More experienced and confident teachers generally expressed

more positive attitudes toward inspection, viewing it as an opportunity for guidance and improvement. In contrast, less experienced teachers were more likely to perceive inspection as stressful and evaluative.

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

Teachers identified a range of inspector behaviors that influenced their perceptions of the inspection process and the quality of guidance provided. These behaviors were categorized into positive and negative practices.

Positive guidance behaviors included:

- Clearly explaining the purpose of the visit and observation
- Maintaining a non-intrusive presence during classroom observation
- Taking notes professionally without disrupting the lesson
- Interacting appropriately and positively with students
- Demonstrating a calm, respectful, and professional attitude
- Acknowledging teachers' strengths alongside areas for improvement

In contrast, negative behaviors reported by teachers included:

- Entering the classroom without prior introduction or explanation
- Displaying judgmental attitudes or body language
- Interrupting classroom activities through inappropriate interaction with students
- Showing negative facial expressions that created discomfort
- Focusing solely on weaknesses without recognizing strengths
- Creating an atmosphere of tension, fear, and stress

These findings indicate that inspector behavior plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' experiences and determining whether inspection is perceived as supportive or evaluative.

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

The findings highlight that the type and quality of feedback provided after classroom observation significantly influenced teachers' perceptions of inspection as a guidance process.

Teachers reported that specific, constructive, and actionable feedback was highly valued and contributed positively to their professional development. Feedback that included clear suggestions for improvement was perceived as supportive and beneficial.

Conversely, feedback that focused only on weaknesses without acknowledging strengths was viewed as discouraging and demotivating. Teachers emphasized the importance of balanced feedback that recognizes both strengths and areas for development.

Additionally, immediate oral feedback was generally preferred over delayed written feedback, as it allowed for clarification and discussion. Opportunities for dialogue and interaction with inspectors further enhanced the perceived value of feedback. Teachers also appreciated feedback that included practical

demonstrations or modeling of effective teaching practices, as it provided clear guidance for improvement.

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

The findings revealed that inspection practices had a significant emotional and professional impact on teachers. Participants reported a range of emotional responses depending on the behavior and approach of the inspector.

Inspectors perceived as harsh, critical, or unsupportive tended to evoke feelings of anxiety, stress, and defensiveness among teachers. These negative emotions often reduced teachers' willingness to engage with feedback or implement suggested changes.

In contrast, inspectors who demonstrated respectful, supportive, and constructive behaviors fostered positive emotional responses, including confidence, motivation, and openness to learning. Teachers were more likely to accept guidance and make improvements when they felt supported rather than judged.

Overall, the emotional climate of the inspection process played a critical role in determining its effectiveness. Positive experiences enhanced teachers' professional growth, whereas negative experiences hindered development and reduced motivation.

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

Teachers provided several practical suggestions to improve the guidance role of inspection and enhance its effectiveness. These recommendations included:

- Increasing communication prior to inspection visits to clarify expectations and reduce anxiety
- Shifting the focus of inspection from evaluation toward support and professional development
- Providing specific, constructive, and actionable feedback
- Offering follow-up support to assist teachers in implementing recommendations
- Recognizing teachers' strengths in addition to identifying areas for improvement
- Providing professional development training for inspectors, particularly in mentoring and coaching skills
- Encouraging ongoing dialogue and continuous interaction rather than one-time inspection visits

These suggestions emphasize the need for a more collaborative, supportive, and developmental approach to inspection practices.

### **5. Discussion**

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

The findings of this study have important implications for improving inspection practices in primary schools in Al Ajilat. A key result was that many teachers perceived inspectors primarily as evaluators rather than as providers of professional guidance. This indicates a need to shift inspection practices toward a more developmental and supportive approach.

One major implication concerns inspector training. The findings suggest that inspectors require more comprehensive preparation in mentoring, coaching, and delivering constructive feedback. Rather than focusing solely on identifying weaknesses, inspectors should be equipped with the skills to guide teachers in improving their instructional practices and to support their professional growth.

Another important implication is the need for revision of inspection protocols. Current procedures should be reviewed to ensure that sufficient emphasis is placed on the guidance function of inspection. This may include structured stages such as pre-observation meetings, post-observation feedback sessions, and follow-up support. Such measures would help transform inspection from a one-time evaluative event into an ongoing developmental process.

The findings also highlight the importance of clear communication. Providing teachers with detailed information about the purpose, procedures, and expectations of inspection can reduce anxiety and promote a more positive perception of the process. When teachers understand that inspection is intended to support rather than judge them, they are more likely to engage with feedback constructively.

Finally, the study underscores the need to strengthen inspector–teacher relationships. Building trust through ongoing interaction and professional dialogue can enhance the effectiveness of inspection. When teachers perceive inspectors as supportive partners rather than authority figures, they are more open to feedback and more willing to implement suggested improvements.

## **5.2 Balancing Control and Guidance**

This study confirms the existence of a fundamental tension between inspection as a mechanism of control and as a source of guidance. While teachers expressed a clear preference for supportive and developmental interactions, they also recognized the necessity of accountability within the education system.

Achieving an effective balance between these two functions remains a significant challenge. Inspection systems must ensure that educational standards are maintained while also promoting teacher development. The findings suggest that this balance can be achieved through several strategies.

First, there should be a clear distinction between evaluative and developmental components of inspection. Separating these roles, either structurally or procedurally, may help reduce teachers' anxiety and allow them to engage more openly with guidance.

Second, inspection systems should establish transparent standards and procedures that teachers can clearly understand and trust. Clarity in expectations can reduce uncertainty and foster a sense of fairness in the inspection process.

Third, inspectors should be trained to navigate between evaluative and supportive roles effectively. This requires not only technical expertise but also strong interpersonal and communication skills.

## **5.3 Cultural Context Considerations**

The findings of this study must be interpreted within the cultural context of Al Ajilat. Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping how teachers perceive inspectors and respond to inspection practices.

Elements such as respect for authority, power distance, and communication norms influence teachers' expectations and interpretations of inspector behavior. In contexts where hierarchical relationships are emphasized, inspectors may be viewed primarily as authority figures, which can reinforce perceptions of inspection as control rather than support.

At the same time, cultural norms related to professionalism and collegiality can affect how feedback is received and interpreted. For example, indirect communication styles or sensitivity to criticism may influence how teachers respond to evaluative comments.

Therefore, any efforts to improve inspection practices must be context-sensitive. Policies and training programs should take into account local cultural values and professional norms to ensure that guidance is delivered in a manner that is both effective and culturally appropriate.

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

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the sample size was limited to 12 teachers from five schools in a Al Ajilat, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may not fully reflect actual inspector behaviors or classroom practices. Third, the data were collected at a single point in time, which does not allow for the examination of changes in perceptions over time. Finally, the study focused exclusively on teachers' perspectives and did not include the views of inspectors, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the inspection process.

Future research should address these limitations by:

- Expanding the sample to include teachers from multiple regions
- Employing mixed-methods approaches that combine interviews, observations, and surveys
- Conducting longitudinal studies to examine changes in perceptions over time
- Including the perspectives of both teachers and inspectors
- Investigating the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at enhancing the guidance role of inspection

Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how inspection practices can be improved to better support teacher development and educational quality.

#### **6. Conclusions**

This study provided a systematic investigation into primary school teachers' perspectives on the guidance role of inspectors in Al Ajilat primary schools. Adopting a qualitative approach and utilizing semi-structured interviews, the research generated rich and detailed insights into teachers' experiences, perceptions, and responses to inspection practices. The study was grounded in the theoretical understanding of inspection as a dual process involving both control and guidance.

The findings revealed that teachers' perceptions of inspectors were influenced by several interconnected factors, including pre-inspection expectations, inspector behaviors during classroom visits, the quality of post-observation feedback, and the emotional climate of the inspection process. Inspectors who demonstrated professionalism, respect, and supportive communication, and who provided clear and

constructive feedback, were perceived positively and viewed as facilitators of professional development. In contrast, inspectors who emphasized evaluation over guidance, adopted critical or discouraging attitudes, or provided vague and unbalanced feedback were perceived negatively and, in some cases, hindered teachers' professional growth.

The study highlights the importance of shifting inspection practices toward a more developmental and supportive model. The findings suggest that educational authorities in Al Ajilat should strengthen inspector training programs with a focus on mentoring, coaching, and effective feedback strategies. In addition, inspection procedures should be revised to prioritize professional development through structured feedback, follow-up support, and continuous communication between inspectors and teachers. Building sustained, trust-based relationships between inspectors and teachers is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of inspection as a guidance mechanism.

Ultimately, the goal is to develop an inspection system that successfully balances accountability with professional support—one in which inspectors are perceived not as authoritative evaluators, but as collaborative partners in teachers' ongoing professional development.

This study also emphasizes the significance of incorporating the perspectives of those directly involved in the inspection process. By focusing on teachers' voices, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how inspection practices are experienced in practice. Recognizing and responding to these perspectives can enable educational systems to design more effective inspection frameworks that support teacher development and, consequently, improve the overall quality of education.

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