

**FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE****School Inspection and Supervision in Improving Primary School Quality in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia): Purpose, Structure, and Operation**Esayas Gorfe Ashagre<sup>1\*</sup> and Kenenissa Dabi Furi<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Planning and Management, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, Mekelle University, Mekelle, Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Planning and Management, College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*\*Corresponding author: [esuqts1@gmail.com](mailto:esuqts1@gmail.com)***ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to examine how the established organizations of inspection and supervision contribute to the effective implementation of regulatory policies, purposes, and operations. The study utilized a qualitative case study method, with purposive selection of the Ministry of Education (MoE), city administration Education Bureau, and Regulatory Authority; and random selection of sub-cities and district cluster school centers. The data collection instruments were interview with checklist guides and document analysis guides. The interview involved purposively selected 31 participants: officials, experts, inspectors, and supervisors. The results found that multiple policies were formulated to address different issues of school inspection and supervision organizations. The lack of mutual understanding of the purposes and overlapping roles between inspectors and supervisors hinders cooperation. Communication with the lowest structure was problematic due to the evolving supervisory structure and shrinking inspection structure in the MoE. The lack of resources affects the relationship between supervisors, schools, and inspectors. Inspection and supervision directorates should revisit and clearly define their respective purposes and roles to avoid duplication of work, role conflict, and fatigue to improve primary school quality effectively. The shortage of resources needs to be addressed, and leaders should be held accountable through a clear and comprehensive policy. Lack of proper accreditation and operation below the required standards in certain government schools is a serious concern as it negatively impact students. It is recommended that the responsibility of accrediting and re-accrediting schools should be placed within the Education Bureau.

**Keywords:** Improving School Quality, Inspection models, Purpose of Inspection, Purpose of Supervision, Supervision Models

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**INTRODUCTION**

Improving the quality of education is an essential aspect of education systems worldwide. While developing countries have made significant progress in educational access, ensuring quality remains challenging (Healey & Crouch, 2015). An inspection system should be established to monitor and improve the capacity of educational institutions (Usta, 2021). While an inspectorate is required to emphasize school output and results, there is a growing claim that school inspectors play a role in school development and go beyond focusing on accountability aims (Baxter et al., 2017). While quality education has had attention worldwide, there is rare agreement on the term within the international community (Yoo et al., 2019). Quality is conceptualized as fit to the purpose, providing improved education that meets performance standards, and legislative and professional requirements and making improved decisions.

Various supervision models characterized by different structures are used in many countries (Grauwe, 2014). The structure involves the devolution of the dominant role of the central government in school supervision at the local level and delegating control and support functions to local actors (Ehren, 2016). This model has been used in New Zealand, the Netherlands, Korea, Finland, and England. Each level

has specific responsibilities, such as central supervision services, regional supervision offices, district supervisors, school boards, and principals or head teachers (Mahfooz et al., 2010). By instituting this enabling school supervision organizational structure, countries can improve the quality of education by ensuring that all schools receive regular support and that the supervisory role focuses not only on administrative supervision but also on quality issues (Haris et al., 2018). School inspections are vital to evaluate and enhance performance, ensure professional compliance, implement policies, and demonstrate government expertise (Baxter et al., 2017).

One of the crucial aspects of effective management is organizing. This involves establishing a well-defined structure for the organization that can help achieve desired outcomes, coordinate tasks, and establish formal relationships between individuals performing these tasks. An effective organizational structure can significantly contribute to the success of inspection and supervision systems by streamlining operations and supporting output.

This study is guided by institutional theory and the program theory focuses on policy assumptions. The institutional theory explains that organizational structures provide a framework that helps members behave consistently and make decisions. Members must follow organizational values, regulations, protocols, and routines. The rules guide behavior, so people behave rationally (Simon 1945/1997 cited in Scott, 2008). For the successful implementation of the general education inspection policy, it is necessary to adhere to the definitions provided by the program theory. These definitions are crucial for evaluating whether the policy is achieving its intended outcomes. The program theory is based on the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model, a conceptual framework that identifies the inputs required and the necessary processing tasks needed to transform these inputs into outputs. If the inspectorate and the supervisory office assess and support the quality of schools, it will result in better educational quality and provide more added values. The inspectorate can provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of schools if they have access to all relevant information. The supervisory office can also provide support and guidance to help schools improve in areas where they are weak.

The regulatory organizations in Ethiopia, particularly in the Addis Ababa City Administration, involve various organizational structures, roles, and sources of power. According to the City Government of Addis Ababa (2021), a proclamation was issued to establish the executive and municipal service organs of the Addis Ababa city government. The regulatory authority has confirmed that it was established at both city and sub-city levels through Decree 74/2022 (City Government of Addis Ababa Education and Training Quality Regulatory Authority, 2022). However, it is unclear whether this aligns with the National General Education Inspection Guide set forth by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. Education supervision has been established in Addis Ababa city administration, consisting of the City Administration Education Bureau, Sub-city Education Office, District or Cluster School, and School level (Translation) (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2022). The Ministry of Education's supervision body has been recently established, according to an unpublished Job Evaluation Grading (JEG) document. The Addis Ababa City administration's supervision body is called the Addis Ababa Education Bureau General Education Supervision Directorate (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2022). It is a fact that there is no evidence to suggest how policy documents are consistently developed across various levels of authority. For instance, the Business Reengineering manual of the Addis Ababa Supervision Directorate was prepared when the concerned organ at the Ministry of Education had not developed a supervision framework. Moreover, the names and organizational structures established for inspection and supervision at the national and city administration levels are not uniform, which raises concerns and necessitates further inquiry.

The National Inspection Framework in Ethiopia provides standardized inspections for schools. It outlines the focus areas and aspects to evaluate, sets the inspection process, and a code of conduct for inspectors (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The school improvement framework provides standards, tools, and procedures to enhance the quality of schools. Schools can use a self-evaluation form to assess their strengths and weaknesses in four domains, set goals, and develop improvement plans. The framework promotes collaboration among stakeholders to enhance students' academic achievements and learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2007).

**Statement of the Problem**

Education regulators play a crucial role in achieving improvement, compliance monitoring, and liaison purposes, as highlighted by (Ehren, 2016). Their efforts are crucial in ensuring that the education system is efficient, and effective, and provides quality education to all students. Grauwe's perspective on the matter suggests that adopting both the roles of control and improvement could potentially result in conflicting situations. It is important to consider this when making decisions that involve such roles (Ehren, 2016). Separate bodies for school quality management are based on the assumption that an Inspectorate providing advice to the school cannot independently verify its quality. This is also related to the constitutional principle of 'Freedom of education', which implies that an Inspectorate should only focus on school output and results (Baxter et al., 2017). In many countries, separating control and support functions is attempted to resolve tensions. However, it has led to deteriorating relationships between school inspectors and teachers, principals, and supervisors (Ehren, 2016). School inspection policy in Ethiopia has ideally emphasized a compliance-oriented model of governance and has placed greater emphasis on support, control (evaluation), and accountability. This raises concerns about how a single organization with a dual identity can simultaneously support quality improvement and ensure accountability. Baxter et al. (2017) suggested that more research is needed to determine if accountability-oriented and development-oriented aims can coexist during inspections, and if so, under what conditions.

Considering the efforts to improve the quality of general education in Ethiopia, the quality of education at all levels needs more attention. For example, in the newly revised Education and Training Policy Federal Ministry of Education (2023) of Ethiopia, it is stated that education quality is declining and provided as evidence that students are not achieving the expected results, that teachers are limited in their competence and in their ability to help students reach the required level of competence, and that schools do not support learning. They do not provide the necessary resources. In addition, the 2021 EGRA study found no improvement in students' reading abilities compared to previous studies (Ministry of Education, 2022). The 8th-grade national exam results of Addis Ababa public schools showed a significant number of students repeating every year. In 2022, out of 36,354 students, 13,108 (36%) repeated, while 23,216 (64%) passed. Similarly, in 2021, out of 40,584 students, 18,620 (46%) repeated, and 21,964 (54%) passed. The Federal Ministry of Education identified various reasons for low student achievement, including a lack of qualified teachers, inadequate planning and supervision, and inconsistent professional development programs.

Overall, this study is timely and relevant because the current level of education has fallen to alarming levels. Inspection and supervision, as a quality assessment system, are still the focus of many countries. For instance, Baxter et al. (2017) pointed out that school inspections sometimes attract the focus of professional, public, and political controversies and it is important to know which aspects of the inspections make them vulnerable to controversy. Clarke and Ozga (2011) indicated that inspection, a form of remote governance, is still unstable and leads to a process of drafting and managing unresolved policies. In addition, Gordon (2019) suggested that supervision scholars should identify contradictory policy realities with practitioners to reduce research, practice, and policy gaps. Moreover, Baxter et al. (2017) call attention to research to investigate what aims inspections should achieve.

The responsibility for ensuring that schools comply with legal structures and norms is entrusted to school inspectors, who are granted considerable professional judgment. These inspectors and supervisors are regarded as change agents and front-line leaders who have the power to influence the rules, norms, and belief systems within schools. However, differences in understanding and enforcing policies may impede organizational objectives. Therefore, to achieve desired outcomes, it is crucial to identify and address gaps in communication and coordination within and between organizations and regulatory services. In Ethiopia, numerous studies have tackled quality management issues in schools, including surveys on education-based supervision systems, teachers' attitudes toward supervision, and the challenges and roles of supervision in public secondary schools. This study analyzes how inspection and supervision models enable the implementation of policies and operations. It examines benefits, challenges, standards, and coordination in school inspections. Previous studies were conducted in isolation and with narrow focuses on specific goals, domains, levels, scopes, and research

methodologies. In contrast, this study integrates diverse processes from two distinct institutions, making it a unique contribution to prior investigations.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the established models of inspection and supervision serve the effective implementation of policies, purposes, and operations. Specifically, it examines the benefits and challenges, the interaction and coordination, and the specific standards schools are being evaluated against in school inspection operations.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Study design**

To investigate the functioning of the inspection and supervision models, this study employed a qualitative case study approach. The research utilized a variety of data collection methods, including in-depth interviews with carefully selected participants, document analysis, and an extensive review of relevant literature.

### **Sources of data**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used to collect data. Primary sources included official documents such as inspection and supervision policies, and interviews with human subjects. Secondary sources are the products of primary sources involving annual abstracts for education data, and official reports.

### **Target population**

The target population of this study included institutions such as the Ministry of Education, the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, the Quality Regulatory Authority, the Sub-city education offices, and the district cluster school centers. It also involved the MoE experts and inspectors, the Education Bureau supervisors, the Regulatory Authority and sub-city inspectors, and cluster supervisors.

### **Samples and sampling techniques**

Individual samples included in the study were composed of 18 supervisors (involving experts), and 13 inspectors. The 2 heads of the desks (units), 2 general education inspection inspectors, 2 experts in teachers' and education leaders' development, and 1 expert in the education programs and quality improvement were sampled and participated from MoE. The sample included 5 education bureau supervisors, 5 district cluster supervisors, and 4 cluster supervisors' coordinators. The Deputy Director General, the head of the team, and an inspector from the quality regulatory authority (Center) participated. Seven representatives from the sub-cities, including the director, 2 team leaders, and 4 general education inspectors, were included in the sample.

The sampled institutions and individual interviewees were selected through a purposive sampling design. The given sampling approach was used because the MoE was the main federal sector mandated to formulate policies. Besides, the city administration offices were thought to have a well-functional quality management system capable of providing researchers with information. Individual participants were selected for their expertise in national policies and practices. Because of their greater number, district cluster school centers and sub-cities were selected using a simple random sampling design.

### **Data collection methods and instruments**

The data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interview guides were employed for various stakeholders, including MoE inspectors and experts, education bureau supervisors, city and sub-city administration inspectors, and cluster supervisors and coordinators. Policy documents from various organizations, including the MoE, the Education Bureau, and the Regulatory Authority were analyzed using document analysis guides. The interview guide was developed by researchers based on reviewing related literature. The draft instrument was also critically commented on by educators with relevant expertise.

Various data sources were utilized, along with member checking, thick description, saturation, and external reviews, all of which served to strengthen the overall validity of the findings.

**Data collection procedures**

Access to interview participants was facilitated by gatekeepers who were former colleagues working in the study area. The interviews took place in the principals' or the vice principals' offices, while some cluster supervisors were interviewed either in their offices at the schools or the district offices. Sub-city inspectors were interviewed at branch offices. Supervisors and inspectors were interviewed in their respective offices at the Education Bureau, the Regulatory Authority office, and the Ministry of Education. Policy documents were collected from all target institutions and analyzed at a place where the researchers found appropriate.

**Data analysis methods**

The collected data were organized, coded, translated, analyzed, and interpreted using quotations or narrations. To bolster the credibility and accuracy of the case study findings, the raw data was first prepared for analysis, then coded, and finally, themes were identified and interpreted.

**Ethical considerations**

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, how data were used, and their right to refuse participation or withdraw their consent at any time without retaliation. Composite profiles were used to hide participants' identities.

**RESULTS****Findings of policy analysis****Purposes of school inspection and supervision**

The policies analyzed showed inspection and supervision overlap in purpose while differing organizational structures. The purpose of the Regulatory Authority is to carry out monitoring, evaluation, and control work to ensure the quality of education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2022). Also, the purpose of the inspection is to provide monitoring and support and expand the accountability system by evaluating institutions to maintain the quality of education in the general education sector (Ministry of Education, 2013b); it is to ensure the quality of education by providing inspection services, conducting monitoring and controlling on schools, ensuring education and training relevance, conducting research, and issuing school ranking certification (City Government of Addis Ababa Education and Training Quality Regulatory Authority, 2022); and it is to provide proficient and quality support and monitoring to educational institutions to achieve student achievement (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2022).

To achieve the purposes of inspection and supervision services, different organizational structures (models) were established in Ethiopia. The 1994 education and training policy was used as a reference to establish different organizational structures for inspection and supervision services at various levels (Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia, 1994). Recently, many quality management organizations began to emerge to manage the quality of education. Accordingly, the revised education and training policy created the organization of the Education and Training Authority with a mandate to monitor and ensure educational quality, standards, professional standards, and professional ethics (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). In addition, the MoE established supervision and general inspection desks as units under the Educational Programs and Quality Improvement Desk. In Addis Ababa City Administration, the General Education Supervision Directorate is established under the Education Bureau (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2022). The city executive and municipal service organs re-establishment proclamation stipulated the establishment of the city quality regulatory authority (City Government of Addis Ababa, 2021). The Quality Regulatory Authority is re-established according to the decree (74/2022) issued by the city government (City Government of Addis Ababa Education and Training Quality Regulatory Authority, 2022). Accordingly, school supervision was organized at the city administration education bureau, sub-city education office, district or cluster school, and school levels. Also, the inspection was organized at the city and sub-city administration levels.

The Ministry of Education (2013b) mandated the District Inspection Sector to inspect schools, ensure inspections are carried out according to the annual planning schedule, oversee the implementation of

inspectors' recommendations, collect and analyze inspection data, and research educational quality assurance activities. The City Government of Addis Ababa Education and Training Quality Regulatory Authority (2022) requires General Education inspectors to monitor school self-evaluation, conduct standard and sample inspections, gather experience from model institutions, and ensure the relevance of education. Sub-city Inspectors are also required to conduct sample inspections.

At the level of the MoE, supervision is thought of as a key function in evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs and implementation. It involves 13 sub-functions to monitor and support, such as developing evaluation criteria, studying changes in academic performance, preparing reports, and conducting consultation workshops with stakeholders. The Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau (2022) expects supervisors of general education to perform various key roles such as initiating learning and teaching, supporting and monitoring the execution of the general education sector plan, conducting supervision to maintain professional ethics, and creating a comfortable and peaceful learning environment.

The inspection team must see each school at least once in three years. A school will be re-inspected after one year if it does not meet the standard. Classification of schools is being made based on the ensuing scores: a school scored below 50% in Grade 1, between 50%-69.99% in Grade 2, between 70%-89.99% in Grade 3, and between 90%-100% in Grade 4 (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2014). MoE proposed that 20% of institutions in the first year, 40% in the second year, and 40% in the third year be taken for inspection (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The city administration of Addis Ababa used a method of supervision by organizing 12 schools into a cluster based on their proximity. Sampling of schools was used to conduct monitoring at the education bureau level. Clinical and administrative supervision was conducted to support educational institutions. Also, they performed administrative tasks (Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, 2022). The bureau stipulates that cluster supervisors must work to support the school leadership and all schools in their clusters. They are encouraged to visit and support teachers in the classroom. The cluster coordinator should perform clinical supervision and administrative tasks.

The inspection process is carried out focusing on the input-process-output domains. The input standards include facilities, buildings, human resources, and finance. The process standards involve student learning, teaching methods, supporting female and special needs students, continuous professional development, continuous assessment, and feedback. The output standards contain internal efficiency, exam results, civic virtues, school staff interaction, and community participation.

### **Findings from interviews**

#### ***Demographic profile***

The majority of experts had second degrees in specific subject teaching, education bureau, and cluster supervisors held degrees in EdPM, and regulatory authority inspectors had degrees in teaching, EdPM, or business management. One branch inspector had a second degree in EdPM, while the others had undergraduate degrees. The majority of them had no leadership training.

#### ***Purposes of school inspection and supervision***

When inspectors were asked to explain the purpose of inspection and supervision, all inspectors stated that inspection and supervision aim to ensure the quality of education through support and control. They are similar because both aim to improve the quality of schools and student performance and behavior. Inspection aims to ensure accountability by taking action, while supervision aims to provide monitoring and support to schools. A respondent stated that the purpose of supervision is to provide support through clinical supervision to teachers and conduct administrative monitoring and evaluation to provide support to the school leaders. According to three inspectors, the function of supervision is fully continuous support. Supervision does not judge. The supervisory agency is not tasked with auditing but often uses inspection findings to support schools regularly. Supervisors aimed to support schools according to the activities (that have different purposes) detailed in their checklists. An inspector stated that the purpose of supervision focuses on providing support on the process to improve quality. One of its purposes was related to filling the school implementation gaps identified by inspectors.

Five inspectors reported the function of inspection in terms of inspectors' roles. The purpose of the inspection is to ensure improvement and address gaps. Inspectors provide recommendations for improvement. Taking corrective action to create pressure on schools to improve was mentioned as part of the purpose of the school inspection. Inspectors believe that the purpose of the inspection is reflected in the domains of school inspection (in terms of input, process, and output). Three respondents said that supervision is aimed at providing continuous support to teachers and principals and identifying gaps for school improvement. Inspection is aimed at monitoring and controlling schools to ensure accountability periodically. Also, the respondent stated that the purpose of supervision is to provide professional support to the school staff, while inspection aims to evaluate and help schools receive resources.

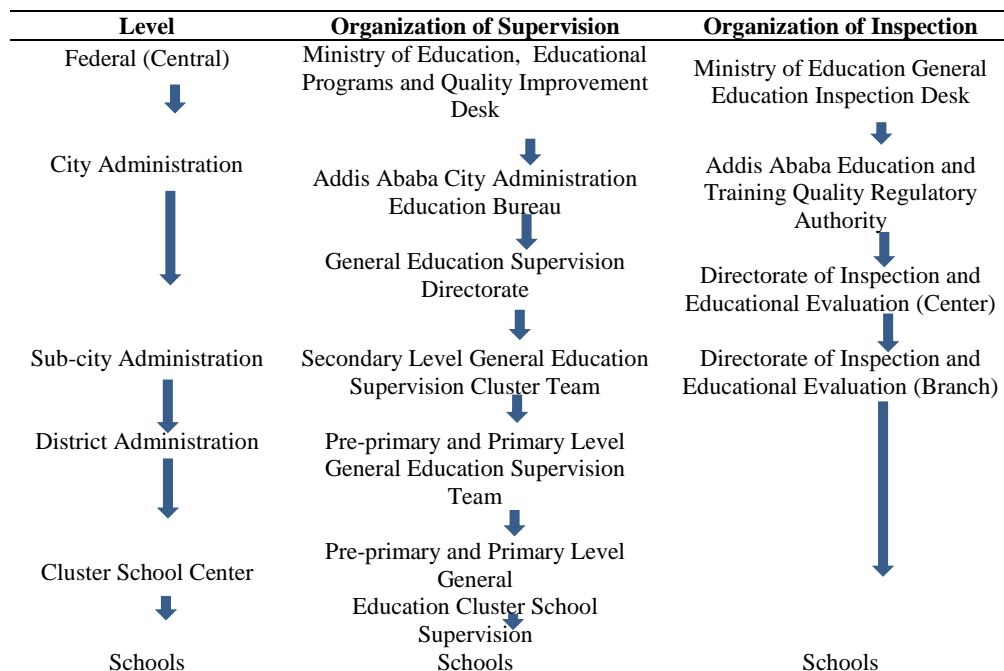
As stated by the interviewee, the purpose of supervision is to enforce policies and standards issued by the Ministry of Education to achieve the quality of education. Supervision is aimed at carrying out different monitoring and empowerment activities to enable standards and plans to be implemented and gaps identified by inspections to be filled. However, he said that inspection aims to improve institutions' efficiency and ensure accountability. The interviewee reported that the supporting function of inspection has created role confusion. When inspectors do classroom observations, they do not communicate with the supervisors, so when they give feedback, there is a problem of creating situations that conflict with procedures and instructions.

### ***Organizational Structures (Models) of Inspection and Supervision***

When interviewees were asked what organizational structure was created to implement supervision policies, the cluster and education bureau supervisors stated that the external supervision was organized from the city administration education bureau to the level of sub-city and district cluster school centers. Almost all cluster and education bureau supervisors were unsure whether there was a supervision organization at the Ministry of Education. Supervision was not organized separately under the name of supervision, according to MoE respondents. It was recently organized under the Education Programs and Quality Assurance Desk and was interchangeably named School Improvement. Interviewees (from the center and branch) said that there was an organization of general education inspection at the city administrative level of the Addis Ababa Quality Regulatory Authority (called the center). Similar regulatory bodies have also been established as branches in eight sub-cities areas. Moreover, the MoE inspectors stated that general inspection had been established and worked at the Directorate level. Now it is shrinking into a new form at the desk level and is organized with only three people at the MoE level. The models (organization structures) of inspection and supervision systems are illustrated as shown below (Fig.1).

The analyzed policies authorized the Ministry's General Education Inspection Desk to conduct inspections, while the Educational Programs and Quality Improvement Desk is thought to perform supervision. In Addis Ababa, a vigilant system of supervision and inspection is established to maintain high standards of education across all levels. The Addis Ababa City Administration inspections are conducted by the Directorate of General Education Inspection (Center and Branch). The General Education Supervision Directorate and Primary Education Supervision Team (the District Cluster School Center) supervise the schools in the area.

When interviewees were asked to identify the bodies that are tasked to perform supervision and inspection operations at various levels of the city administration, the MoE experts said that they did not know the names of institutions that are tasked to perform supervision services at the city, sub-city, and district cluster school levels. Almost all cluster and education bureau supervisors reported that they did not know the name of the supervisory organ in the MoE. About half of the supervisors from the education bureau and the district cluster school centers were unable to appropriately distinguish the name of the supervision organ in the education bureau. Three education bureau supervisors and two cluster supervisors wrongly labeled the names of the sub-city and cluster supervision institutions. The MoE respondents were capable of designating the inspection organs at the city and sub-city administrations. Half of the interviewees of the regulatory authority and the sub-city inspection offices were able to identify the inspection body in the MoE correctly. All inspectors were able to identify the names of each other's institutions properly.



**Figure 1:** The Structure of the Addis Ababa (Ethiopian) Supervision and Inspection Model

*Source:* Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau (2022), City Government of Addis Ababa Education & Training Quality Regulating Authority (2022), and Addis Ababa City Administration Quality Regulatory Authority.

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#### ***Structural Issues that Enable Policy Implementation***

When asked what organizational or structural issues they think enable policy implementation issues, four cluster supervisors and coordinators said that sometimes the principal supervises the supervisor. The supervisors are called to meetings without any prior knowledge of why they are being called. Callers pay little attention to the work that the supervisors have already planned. This practice often prevented them from doing their work as planned and created a workload. They demanded the establishment of a clear chain of command and line of authority capable of avoiding communication barriers between the upper and lower structures. Five supervisors asked for a clear guideline of authority and a relationship should be established between the education bureau, the sub-city and district education offices, and cluster supervision organizations. According to six cluster supervisors and a coordinators, if the accountability of the cluster supervisor is hierarchical, it should be directly with the



district education office. Supervision at the district level is currently organized as a dependency under the School Improvement Team. However, they suggest that a separate structure for supervision would allow supervisors to spend more time helping with the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Respondents said that the current supervision organization should be strengthened. Five supervisors have expressed their opinion that the organization at the cluster level needs to be reinforced by providing more budgetary resources, materials, and guidelines. They believe that these measures will enable them to use their organizational and personal power bases more effectively and flexibly, thereby enhancing their ability to carry out their duties.

An inspector said that it would be better for the inspectorate to continue as it is currently operating. There is an opportunity to work independently despite there being circumstances when the regulatory authority may not be impartial completely. Two interviewees stated that general education inspection in the MoE is downsized from the directorate level to the desk with three inspectors. Interviewees suggested an independent inspection authority at the minister and regional level as well as its accountability shall be to the prime minister's office. The regulatory authority is responsible to the Mayor of Addis Ababa. Two interviewees suggested that the inspection institute established at the level of Addis Ababa and the level of the Ministry of Education be made accountable for the newly established education and training authority. An inspector said,

“Our regulatory authority office accredits institutions itself, controls and reaccredits itself, it violates the principle of independence. It is the education bureau that oversees building construction works and has to decide where a new school should be opened following the community's request” [(Branch Inspector -1 ( BI – 1), Jan 25, 2023)].

They said that it is appropriate if the authority to accredit the opening of new schools is done under the city administration education bureau.

### ***Relationship and Coordination***

Supervisors were asked to explain how they interact horizontally with the city's Quality Regulator, and if they were experiencing problems with this interaction, they were asked why. The supervisor said,

“I see the inspectors positively. They are working to maintain school standards, although they do not always provide school support as supervisors” (Education Bureau Supervisor - 3 (EBS - 3), Feb 17, 2023).

Conversely, cluster supervisors (CS) said,

“We have no intimate relationship with inspectors who sometimes measure our work and tell us. Business as usual, we will be there when inspectors submit a report” (CS – 2 May 2, 2023).

The supervisor stated that despite they had reached a mutual agreement with the Quality Regulator, efforts to work together have not been successful. Because the interface signed was not bound by an obligation. The supervisor also said,

“We occasionally work together; we don't have a strong relationship; sometimes they invite us to attend when they submit a report” (EBS – 2, Feb 17, 2023).

The relationship between supervisors and inspectors was that inspectors report and supervisors listen. They said that inspectors and supervisors were not working together in a coordinated manner. Supervisors stated that they would try to fill the gaps such as problems related to methods of teaching, lesson observation, and student discipline. However, when inspectors often identified gaps related to school standards, supervisors did nothing because the gaps to be solved were beyond the authority of schools and supervisors. When the inspection report was submitted, there was no consensus that the gap reported as a problem would be presented in the form of a report next year. There was no question as to why this happened and that there was no tendency to bring together the two institutions to reach a strong debate and a solution.

As reported by supervisors, inspectors play both a controlling and supportive role. Mostly they emphasize their supporting role. Even if we identify and inform the inspectorate to take measures against schools working under the school standards (for example, relating to over-class-student ratio, and misuse of promotion policy), they could not hold the government schools responsible for not meeting the required standards. Every year inspectors use similar measurements framed in checklists to carry out audits in schools knowing that many school standards could not be easily improved without improving the existing standards to fit the existing situation of the city. Fulfilling school standards requires huge resources possibly to be covered by top authorities outside the school. Despite this, every time supervisors were at the forefront to be held accountable for the gap. According to supervisors, there was no comprehensive accountability policy able to hold all education actors and relevant stakeholders involved at different authority levels in the city administration education system.

Inspectors stated that Quality Regulatory Authority had better relations with the supervision directorate in terms of the exchange of reports. When submitting the inspection report, the supervisors are sometimes available. Conversely, the respondent stated that the Education Bureau had no close relations with the regulatory authorities. Supervisors communicate with inspectors when they want information. The Education Bureau occasionally sends its report to the Quality Regulator Authority. When inspectors give verbal feedback after school inspections, supervisors are more likely to be present than absent. He pointed out that people listening to and responding to feedback were few and there was no good interaction between them.

As reported by three inspectors, there was an improvement in the relationship between the inspection and supervision organizations this year, as supervisors included the inspection results in their plans and implemented them. They stated that it is important to communicate the report in advance to the supervisor and work together to find a common solution. According to four inspectors (branch), when the results of the investigation are announced, relevant stakeholders are present but political leaders are not present. The presence of these political leaders could allow them to achieve their goals by working together to decide on the budget. Two of these respondents stated that supervisors viewed inspectors as faultfinders and that this situation created a gap in their relations.

Supervisors were asked to explain how they interact vertically with the supervisory structure of the Ministry and the lower-level structures. Eight cluster supervisors and coordinators, and four education bureau supervisors said that they had no communication with the supervisory body at the Ministry of Education. An interviewee (from MoE) said,

“We attempted to communicate, but the problem is that there is no organization that can directly communicate with us in each region. Some regions have organized it as the Directorate of School Improvement, some have called it the Teachers, Principals, and Supervisors Process, and others have represented it as a focal person, and in the Ministry of Education, it is made under Educational Programs and Quality Assurance Desk (Unit). As a result, we were unable to establish clear communication and we were unable to assure accountability” [Ministry Expert – 3 (ME – 3), Feb 20, 2023].

According to all cluster supervisors and coordinators, the education bureau supervisors go to the school with their checklists and do mostly administrative and little academic supervision. They stated that there is a gap in working with the cluster supervisors. When they came, they made it clear that they would not work with a joint plan. The education bureau supervisor stated “We work in the office and go to the school to do administrative and classroom supervision and support the school leadership and classroom teachers. We jointly conduct classroom and administrative monitoring with the cluster supervisors” (EBS – 1, Feb 16, 2023).

Five inspectors (from the branch) said that the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the Quality Regulatory Authority is loose. Inspection results are sent to the center, which compiles all reports and sends a final report to the mayor's office, the Ministry of Education, and the district. The interviewee (from MoE) reported “We have a common plan with the education bureau and the regulatory authority. We meet with reports and training” (Ministry Inspection Official – 1 (MIO – 1), Feb 22, 2023). Five interviewees (from the branch) and three interviewees (from the center) said that

they have received training on the revised checklist, but it has not been widely available for all of them. An inspector said,

“I do not know what kind of relationship we have with the Ministry of Education. If there was a strong connection, we wouldn't have the age-old checklist in use today” (Branch Inspector – 7 (BI – 7), May 9, 2023). Also, the interviewee stated, “Although we report the existing gap in teachers' teaching methods and lack of knowledge, the Ministry did not provide any support. There is no value in investing in inspection visits every year if we do not properly use the reports” (BI – 7, May 9, 2023).

As stated by three inspectors, the branch inspectors conduct periodic inspections focused on six programs, while the center supports and monitors impact assessments. They had administrative and academic responsibilities in the Mayor's office and the MoE. The center facilitates the allocation of budgets, hiring staff, training, and conducting verification inspections. The branch offices communicate with districts and schools during school inspections and send feedback reports. According to the analyzed documents, reports were not easily available and accessible to each inspector in the form of print and soft copy. Although websites were established, they were not easily accessible. Except for old reports, the latest ones are not published and made accessible.

## DISCUSSION

Inspectors' and supervisors' responses have revealed a lack of shared understanding and belief about the purpose of inspection and supervision services. Some inspectors and supervisors believed that improving school quality was a common purpose, while others believed that inspection must aim at ensuring accountability. On the other hand, some supervisors believed that the purpose of supervision must be to support schools. Even though the policies say that both are needed to improve the quality of education, they have different ideas about what that means. This is similar to what other studies have found. In one example, the law said that supervisors should help schools, while inspectors should ensure they follow the rules (Brown et al., 2016). But in reality, inspectors felt pressured to do more than that. Inspection is important for making sure schools are doing what they're supposed to and that they're of good quality (Baxter et al., 2017).

The text discusses different policies used to monitor and supervise schools, particularly in Ethiopia. Study shows that effective supervision should encompass a wide range of leadership and organizational policies and practices to enhance the teaching and learning environment in schools (Gordon, 2023). The Supervisory Authority is responsible for monitoring and controlling the quality of education. At the same time, the inspection is another way to ensure the quality of education by controlling schools, providing support, and ensuring accountability. When one organization is responsible for improving schools and holding them accountable for their performance, it can cause problems due to conflicting roles. This can lead to reconsidering whether there should be two separate organizations with different goals. Some countries have already assigned both goals to the same organization, but others focus more on one or the other (Baxter et al., 2017). It's important to have both improvement and accountability because they ensure schools follow the law and improve their teaching methods (Ehren, 2016). However, if inspectors focus too much on improving schools, they may be seen as a threat to the neutrality of the organization and the independence of schools (Baxter et al., 2017). Many countries separate control and support functions by assigning specific staff to support roles like pedagogical advisors or resource persons. However, a strong focus on control during school inspections has led to deteriorating relationships between inspectors and teachers, principals, and [supervisors]. This has brought into question the effectiveness of separating roles (Ehren, 2016).

The situation in Ethiopia presents a challenge as two separate organizations have overlapping roles. Despite both being authorized to support schools, assigning separate control and support functions is not enough. A strong focus on control during school inspections is not sufficient to address the complexity of the issue. Therefore, educators and policymakers must critically scrutinize the matter to find a solution. Their attention is required to ensure that students receive the best possible education and support. Glickman et al. 2018 cited in Gordon (2023) advocated that teachers should take responsibility for their growth and not rely solely on their supervisors. Supervision should focus on growth rather than

compliance and encourage collaboration between teachers to improve instructional practices and teacher involvement in the ongoing reflective inquiry. Baxter and colleague (Baxter et al., 2017) stress the importance of defining "desirable aims" that align with the expectations of all stakeholders involved in maintaining the quality of education, including inspectors, [supervisors], policy-makers, and other professionals.

In Ethiopia, the government has established various bodies to inspect and supervise schools to ensure they provide quality education. Different methods of organizing inspections and supervision were put in place at various levels of the education system. A revised policy was introduced that gives the Education and Training Authority the responsibility of ensuring that schools maintain high standards of education and professionalism. Ethiopia is taking education seriously and is committed to providing quality education to its students. Thus, different agencies work hard to ensure that schools are providing quality education to students.

The Addis Ababa city administration has restructured the inspection system and established a new organization called the Quality Regulatory Authority. This group is dedicated to ensuring that schools are meeting the required standards. Additionally, the Education Bureau in Addis Ababa has set up supervision teams at various levels to support and ensure that all schools in the city are offering high-quality education to their students. The inspection system was organized separately at Addis Ababa's city and sub-city administration levels. And sub-city inspectors directly inspect pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools and the TVET. On the other hand, the organizational structure of supervision was divided into primary and secondary school supervision. At the district level, cluster supervisors support pre-primary and primary schools. Although the national policy mandates the establishment of inspection structures at different levels, some deviations were observed. Specifically, there were issues with the supervision structure at the district and cluster level, which presents challenges in maintaining hierarchical and horizontal relationships. The absence of a national supervision policy resulted in a misaligned supervision structure. The cluster supervision structure was responsible for the school improvement team, leading to a lack of resources and reduced importance of cluster supervision during budget and resource allocation. In Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, efforts are being made to reduce the distance between the District Education Office and schools. Officers are being placed closer to schools or distinct education units are being established under the DEO to provide regular support to schools (Grauwe et al., 2011). When supervisors were far from schools, visits were infrequent. Countries addressed this by creating more supervisory levels or clustering schools around a resource center (Grauwe & Carron, 2004). In Indonesia, supervisors are responsible for the empowerment of primary and secondary staff under the Ministry of National Education. At the district level, primary school supervisors report to the head of the district education office (Haris et al., 2018).

In addition, it appears that having a well-organized inspection and supervision structure in the Ministry is crucial. This upper body will play a vital role in unifying the purposes and tasks of inspection and supervision systems operating at different administrative levels of the country. However, the fate of the inspection service was not promising because it was shrinking from the Directorate to the Desk. Meanwhile, the supervision system was emerging as part of a unit in the MoE. These findings shed light on the complexities and challenges of the inspection and supervision systems and how they strive to impact the education sector.

To summarize, the current hierarchical structure poses a significant challenge for the inspection system. Although it is intended to operate independently from the government and other actors, being accountable to the Ministry puts its autonomy at risk. When the Ministry retains control over the budget and personnel appointments, it becomes difficult for the inspectorate to remain impartial. Therefore, it is imperative to reevaluate the current policies and find solutions to address this issue. Countries around the world have different inspection and supervision models to manage the quality of their education systems. The Netherlands has inspections at several levels, while Korea and Finland have them at two levels. New Zealand and England have inspections at the central, local authority, and school site levels (Mahfooz et al., 2010), and the department in charge of inspections within the New Zealand government operates independently from the main structure of the Ministry of Education and is answerable directly

to parliament (Whitby, 2010). In the Flemish inspection system, school inspectors perform the task of controlling schools, while school counselors perform advice or support (Baxter et al., 2017).

The recent restructuring has breathed new life into inspection protocols, with their findings now being used for policy discussions, research, and implementation. This has enabled institutions to stay on top of their game by keeping track of their progress against specified standards. The other significant advantage of this restructuring is the time-saving aspect for supervisors. They no longer have to spend hours walking to and from district offices, which gives them more time to support the learning and teaching process and school administration. This means they can provide timely support and be available when schools need their assistance. Additionally, the impartiality of inspectors and the inspectorate is improving to enable them to perform their duties with the utmost integrity. The benefits of this new system align with the advantages of supervision, such as improving educational quality, ensuring continuous professional development, eliminating potential shortcomings, keeping up with the latest developments and changes, and promoting order within the school (Ozdemir & Yirci, 2015).

It seems like supervisors are facing some serious top-down communication challenges. Spontaneous calls for meetings were causing dissatisfaction. These issues put them out of their planned tasks and increase the burden on their work. Considering unplanned tasks may hinder the success of the organization, top-level leaders should be flexible in their approach. Studies suggest top-level leaders should prefer openness in organizational communication as it can facilitate downward supportive communication (De Nobile & Bilgin, 2022). Supervisors are struggling to maintain budgets, materials, and office supplies, directly affecting the relationship between supervisors, inspectors, and schools. This lack of provision of resources is a cause for concern that needs attention. Leadership for learning can be positively or negatively influenced by factors such as working conditions, availability of resources, policy and management, training, professional status, and the extent of professional culture (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011).

The cooperation between inspectors and supervisors was problematic. The feedback given by inspectors lacks good interaction, and supervisors are not well-informed in advance to contribute better. The joint document prepared at the municipal administration level hasn't been evaluated, and there is a problem with working together, the roles and responsibilities of inspectors and supervisors overlap, which creates further issues in the cooperation process. Some inspectors feel that supervisors view them as faultfinders, which could create a gap in their relations.

There are significant communication and relationship issues within the supervisory structure of the Ministry of Education. This is primarily due to the lack of consistent organizational structures and terminology. The role of educational bureau supervisors included administrative and academic supervision at schools. Collaboration between educational bureau supervisors and cluster supervisors is lacking due to minimal observations and a lack of joint planning.

The Ministry and the regulator had limited communication. It was rare to find the latest regulators' reports on a particular topic online. For example, in Turkey and England, it is compulsory to prepare an inspection report after an inspection, which sheds light on and evaluates the activities carried out at the school. The inspection reports of the schools are made available via the website (Usta, 2021). The interviewees had administrative and academic responsibilities in the Mayor's office and the MoE. It seems useful that the Regulatory Authority should prepare a report for the city administration Council. Study findings pointed out that an inspection report is a feedback tool for reporting what schools have achieved in terms of institutional performance, stakeholder views on school management, and academic achievement (Usta, 2021).

Inspectors face challenges in ensuring government schools meet the required standards. Some standards are difficult to improve without significant resources. The same assessment approach is used repetitively, leading to exhaustion among inspectors and supervisors. Supervisors are held responsible for the gap despite the lack of a comprehensive policy. The issue requires the involvement of relevant stakeholders at different authority levels in the education system. These results are consistent with the findings of Geletu (2024) who concluded that the schools have shown inadequacies in educational resources, a lack of effective school leadership, and collaboration among multiple educational

stakeholders. The schools have little capacity to improve the professional competencies of teachers, principals, and supervisors through professional development.

Based on the outcomes of the document analysis, it was found that inspectors and supervisors had individual differences in performing their roles. Inspectors had a more checklist-driven approach while supervisors had more complex responsibilities. Supervisors had 50 checklist-driven roles and supervisors had 60 open-ended roles. Both aimed to enhance student outcomes through school improvement. Some overlaps in the roles and purposes of the two agencies were evident. Supervisors support teachers' classroom teaching and oversee the administration of the school. However, the inspectors' mandate is to support beyond ensuring accountability and control. In addition, one of the roles of inspectors stated in the primary school inspection checklist is to conduct classroom observations. This, in turn, puts supervisors and inspectors in conflict over their roles in lesson observation.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Various policies were formulated to guide the organization of inspection and supervision of schools. The policies address different issues namely purposes, organization, operation, roles, and so forth. However, they were not comprehensive in ensuring that everyone was working towards a common goal. Responses obtained from interviewees and policies analyzed have coincided and revealed a lack of shared understanding and belief about the purpose of inspection and supervision services. Quality regulators are experiencing role conflict and fatigue from overlapping responsibilities. This necessitated reconsidering two separate organizations with overlapping purposes. The inspection was shrinking from the Directorate to the Desk, while supervision was emerging. These conditions flag the absence of empowered regulators able to coordinate and support the function of similar organizations at the lower structure in the entire education system. The lack of resources is a cause for concern. Supervisors are struggling to maintain budgets, materials, and offices, directly affecting their relationships with inspectors, schools, and teachers. Supervisors were not communicated openly and ahead of time taking into account their planned tasks and emotions. The cooperation process between school inspectors and supervisors looked so frustrating. Supervisors were not well-informed in advance to contribute better. The joint document hasn't been well implemented due to communication issues. The roles and responsibilities of inspectors and supervisors overlap, creating further issues in the cooperation process. For instance, overlapping roles in lessons have the potential for an unhealthy relationship between them. In addition, the absence of a common supervisory framework (roles) led to weak communication. There are communication and organizational issues in the supervisory structure. There was a lack of coordination between the education bureau and the regulatory authority concerning accrediting and reaccrediting of schools. Inspectors use checklists to audit schools, but some standards are difficult to improve without significant resources. Despite this, the same assessment approach is used repetitively, leading to exhaustion among inspectors and supervisors. The current hierarchical structure poses a significant challenge to the inspection system. Being liable to the Ministry puts its autonomy at risk. It becomes difficult for the inspectorate to remain impartial. No policy was in place to hold education actors accountable for resource deficiencies in schools. Accreditation and reaccreditation of schools were not carried out by the appropriate body, namely in terms of mandate and principle. This principle is based on the assumption that an Inspectorate providing advice to the school cannot independently verify its quality. Some government schools operate below standards without proper accreditation, which can seriously affect students.

### **Recommendations**

Overall, allowing inspectors to perform both the duties of conducting oversight to ensure accountability and providing ongoing support to enhance school quality can create a conflict of roles and lead to strained relationships with schools and supervisors. As the responsibility of supervision is to monitor and assist schools, inspectors need to maintain a regulatory role to ensure both school and professional accountability. This approach can prevent conflicts of interest, relationship issues, and unnecessary resource expenditure. Therefore, the policies need improvement to address various gaps and issues. The Ministry's inspection and supervision bodies should work together to develop inspection and

supervision policies allowing interdependence in function by avoiding overlapping roles. The inspection and supervision directorates of Addis Ababa City Administration should revisit and clearly define their respective purposes and roles. It is suggested to, reconsider whether there should be two organizations with overlapping purposes to avoid duplication of work, role conflict, and fatigue.

It appears that having a well-organized inspection and supervision structure in the Ministry is crucial. The Ministry's coordination is necessary to ensure consistency and uniformity in inspections across different regions and schools. Strengthening the Ministry's involvement in inspections could lead to the presence of standardized accountability and quality control.

The implications for practice include the need for senior leaders to apply open communication to stimulate supportive and collegial direction. Supervisors should be vertically and horizontally communicated ahead of time taking into account their planned tasks and emotions. This can lead to a high commitment to one's assigned task namely to realize school improvement.

All regulators at all levels of authority need to address relationships and collaborative gaps that exist among them. The lack of budgets, materials, and office supplies is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed to avoid communication and cooperation gaps. The regulator authorities should involve relevant stakeholders at different authority levels in the city administration education system to address the lack of resources. This can enable to avoidance of the existing relationship problems between inspectors and supervisors. This in turn can help the two organizations work in a coordinated manner to achieve their objectives.

One effective way to ensure that schools operate at a high standard and provide students with an equal quality of education is to implement proper accreditation measures. Thus, schools can be held accountable for meeting specific educational standards and can work towards continuous improvement to benefit the students and the community. Accreditation helps to promote transparency and fairness in the education system, ensuring that all students have access to quality education, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. It is recommended that the responsibility of accrediting and reaccrediting schools should be placed with the Education Bureau. To achieve this, the Accrediting Unit, which is currently under the Regulatory Authority, should be relocated and placed under the Education Bureau of Addis Ababa City Administration.

For inspections to be effective and accountable, inspection institutions must operate with transparency and independence. To achieve this, it is necessary to reevaluate current accountability policies and implement solutions to address any issues. A potential solution could be to ensure that the Inspection Units within the Ministry and City Administration are accountable to either the Parliament or Council.

The findings of this research offer valuable insights for policy-makers and practitioners seeking to enhance education within city administrations. To that end, additional research is recommended to explore how a distinct inspection system can effectively fulfill its two-fold mission of providing support for quality improvement while also ensuring accountability in schools.

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