



WORKING PAPER

86

EXTERNAL SUPERVISION SUPPORT FOR ENHANCING QUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

M D Ushadevi

ISBN 81-7791-042-6

© 2001, Copyright Reserved

The Institute for Social and Economic Change,
Bangalore

Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) is engaged in interdisciplinary research in analytical and applied areas of the social sciences, encompassing diverse aspects of development. ISEC works with central, state and local governments as well as international agencies by undertaking systematic studies of resource potential, identifying factors influencing growth and examining measures for reducing poverty. The thrust areas of research include state and local economic policies, issues relating to sociological and demographic transition, environmental issues and fiscal, administrative and political decentralization and governance. It pursues fruitful contacts with other institutions and scholars devoted to social science research through collaborative research programmes, seminars, etc.

The Working Paper Series provides an opportunity for ISEC faculty, visiting fellows and PhD scholars to discuss their ideas and research work before publication and to get feedback from their peer group. Papers selected for publication in the series present empirical analyses and generally deal with wider issues of public policy at a sectoral, regional or national level. These working papers undergo review but typically do not present final research results, and constitute works in progress.

EXTERNAL SUPERVISION SUPPORT FOR ENHANCING QUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION¹

M D Ushadevi²

Abstract

The present paper essentially looks at the school visit function of the school inspectors. It attempts to examine to what extent this function plays an enabling role in facilitating the task of quality improvement in primary education. On the basis of content analysis of the data from the official records of four Block Education Offices located in Karnataka State, the paper argues that the school inspectors are engaged in controlling and maintaining functions of the school system, perpetuating the status quoist tendencies.

Introduction

Universalisation of elementary education has remained one of the national priority agendas in the Indian sub-continent. The urgency for realizing this goal has assumed all the more significance in the context of the country being all set to become an active partner in the global economy. Besides, with the spectacular progress achieved in the field of information technology in the recent past, the country cannot afford to sit back on the issue of denying access to basic education to a large majority. Besides, India has still to fulfil its own constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory basic education to all children of the school going age, which was laid down more than 50 years ago. It is in this context that the National Education Policy (1986) has given unqualified priority for universalizing elementary education, with a major thrust on substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential

-
- 1 This is a revised and updated version of the paper presented at the National Conference on Management of School Education in India held during March 5-6, 1998 at NIEPA, New Delhi. The author wishes to thank the anonymous referee for the useful comments received on the earlier version of this paper. However, the author is solely responsible for the views expressed in the paper.
 - 2 Assistant Professor in Education, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore 560 072, INDIA

levels of learning. The main thrust of the policy for quality improvement emanates from the vast empirical evidence over the years which has been consistently pointing out that one of the key elements that need to be addressed in the task of universalisation of elementary education is the quality of primary education.

Following the recommendations of the policy, several national level interventions have been launched towards improving the quality of primary education. These interventions are in the form of institutional support, pedagogic materials and methodologies and capacity building of actors in the education system. These efforts are directed mainly towards overhauling the school system so as to make it more productive and accountable. An important in-built strategy to check the performance and accountability is through a system of external supervision support that forms an integral component of the educational bureaucracy. At the primary stage, it is the educational offices at the block/taluk/tehsil level that are entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring performance of primary schools and teachers through an important line agency such as the school inspectorate, which plays a vital role in maintaining a link between policy and schools.

Theoretical Perspective

School inspection is essentially an important task embedded in the larger supervisory system that prevails in any formal educational organization. Theoretically supervision in education encompasses two basic functions: 1. 'maintaining certain identified systemic norms'; 2. 'promoting change and development'. Both these functions have implications for maximizing the optimal efficiency of the school system. The theoretical justification for the inspectorate comes from the widely held view that it ought to form a significant part of any external support structure designed to facilitate change. Besides, there are also agreements about the ways in which it can best support teachers who wish to innovate. These ways could be giving advice, providing access to academic resources, providing information and linkage with other schools, disseminating information about innovations, organizing in-service training and informing the policy makers and administrators about the needs and views of teachers and schools (Bolam, 1976).

Organizational and administrative theories justify the need for an effective monitoring and inspection system for optimal performance of a system. Similarly, evidence is also available suggesting the positive role played by the monitoring and inspection system to maintain and improve the quality of services in educational institutions (Bolam, et.al, 1985; Dodd, 1968; Lyons & Pritchard, 1976; Maclaine, 1973; Blackie, 1970; Fuller & Clarke, 1994; Levin & Lockheed, 1993; Randenbush & Willms, 1991; World Bank, 1990). It is noted that countries with a tradition of persisting poor quality of primary education, lacunae and inadequacies in the monitoring and inspection system are found to be responsible for such a state of affairs (Lyons, 1975; WB, 1990; Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991; Kumar, 1991; 1993; 1994; 1995;). Further, the emerging pool of literature in the field of primary education across the world emphasises or underlines the crucial role played by the monitoring system in school education (WB, 1995; Govinda & Tapan, 1999; IIEP, 1999; 2000). Recent studies in India have confirmed the inadequate role performed by school administration and monitoring systems to improve the quality of primary education (Mohanty, 1990; IIEP 1998;). In one such study , it is reported that school inspectors (SIs), more frequently visit schools closer to the city and town and rarely visit schools located in backward areas. Further, the study also points out that more than 80 per cent of the visits involve routine inspection of the school and the records maintained in them and that these visits are too short to monitor the academic dimension of the school functioning (Govinda & Varghese 1993).

Notwithstanding the empirical studies pointing to the crucial role played by external supervision support in primary education, in particular of school inspectorate, it is noticed that studies which capture the process and practice of school inspection in its entirety are wanting in the Indian context. Hence, a study of this nature which looks into the actual functioning of school inspectors, will be not only relevant but also vital. Furthermore, the study will also assume special significance in the context of a variety of national-level interventions currently in operation in primary schools as a mark of planned agenda towards quality enhancement in primary education. Thus a study of process and practice of external school monitoring system is essential to understand the kind of role played by school inspectors to improve the quality of primary education, and also to obtain deeper insights

into the interplay of factors, leading to perpetuation of poor quality in education.

The present paper essentially looks at one of the major functions of the school inspectors, namely, the *school visits* function. It also attempts to examine to what extent this function facilitates the task of quality improvement in primary education. The rationale for selecting visit functions of the school inspectorate is based on certain assumptions, which are: 1. routine jobs of school inspectors which can play a much more proactive role to improve the quality of primary education; 2. since there is regularity and contiguity in these functions, they can forge much stronger linkage between school and administration leading to better results; 3. these functions, if pursued properly, can both facilitate and hasten the reforms for change.

The philosophical underpinnings of school visit functions signify that routine visits and monitoring of schools and teachers helps to identify deficiencies in the school system and thereby help teachers to perform better. It also underscores the importance of advising, counselling and guidance functions of the school inspectors so as to achieve the expected results. The present paper is an outcome of a larger study carried out by the author on the role of the school inspectorate in maintaining and monitoring quality in primary education in Karnataka State. This paper focuses on the monitoring functions performed by the school inspectors in the form of school visit functions, which is one of the essential components of the external supervision support service that prevails in the Indian educational system.

Methodology

The study was set in one of the districts, namely Kolar in Karnataka State. Kolar district has 12 blocks with a Block Education Office (BEO) located in each of them. The primary education in the district is being supported by the World Bank sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) Project launched during the first phase in 1994/95. As a result of this intervention, additional block-level structures have been created to provide academic and technical support to the school system. These structures are also entrusted with the responsibility of school monitoring. However, at the time of this study, these fledgling institutions were yet to be operationalised and therefore could not be included in the present

study. The data for the study are drawn from four block education offices selected on purposive sampling basis. These BEOs offices are located in Kolar, Chintamani, Chikkaballpur and Shidlaghatta blocks. These four blocks are typical in terms of spread of schools, the coverage of area and schools for the school inspectors. The qualitative data for the study were collected from the BEO's offices through personal visits spread over a period of six months. Official visit/inspection reports, tour reports/ diaries/programmes and job charts of the inspectors have been examined. In addition, the perceptions of the school inspectors and other educational functionaries have also been gathered through interviews to supplement the documentary data. The analysis has been by and large descriptive and interpretative.

The School Inspectorate in Primary Education in India

In the Indian context, the school inspectorate consists of school inspectors whose principal duties consist of visiting schools under their jurisdiction on a regular basis and also inspecting them periodically. Traditionally, their fundamental role in the school system has been to maintain constant contact with primary schools and teachers and liaise between teachers and higher authorities. During the process, the SIs would monitor teachers' activities and pupils' learning in the classrooms and provide feedback to the higher authorities in terms of visit and inspection reports.

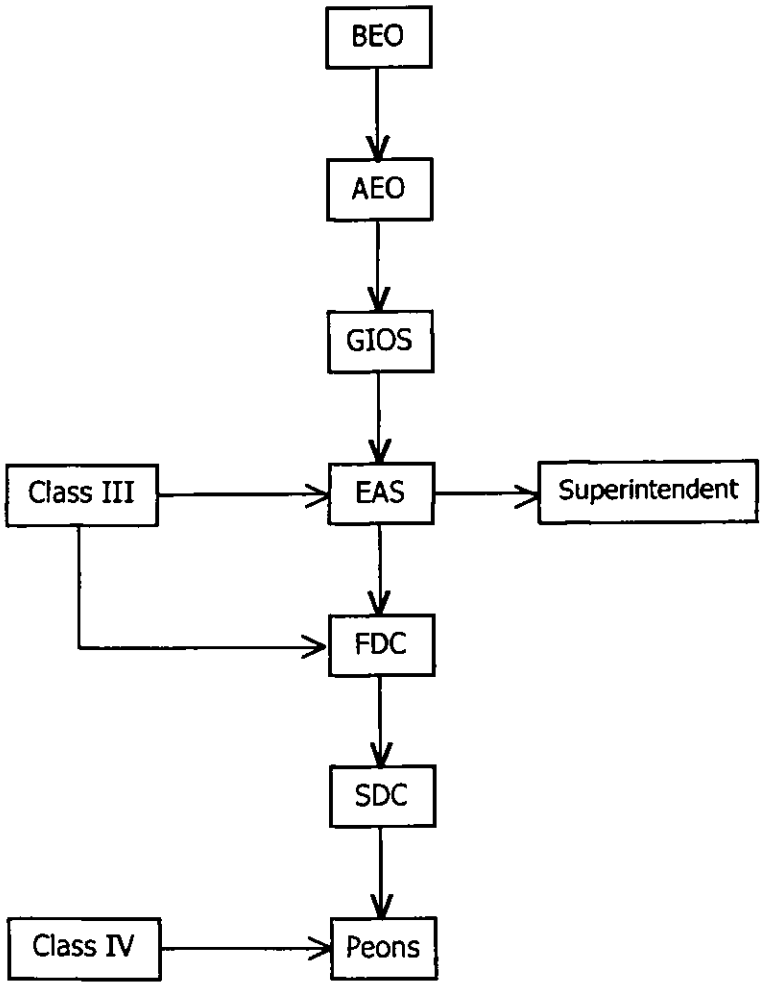
This inspectorate forms an integral part of the educational bureaucracy, which operates at the sub-district level, namely the block or taluk or tehsil. The education offices located at the block level (sub-district) are generally in charge of affairs of elementary education in their respective region. The Block Education Office forms the lowest rung of the educational bureaucratic structure with an independent office of its own and vested with certain powers and authorities for managing formal, non-formal and adult education in the region. And the inspectorate forms a major chunk of this office with its strength invariably overshooting that of other staff.

Within the framework of the nation-wide interventions for comprehensive development of primary education and the decentralized planning and management following the 73rd and 74th Indian constitutional amendments, several important

questions are increasingly moving into the forefront of the national agenda. Some of the questions that have formed the basis for this study are: Whether the functions of the school inspectorate at the grass-roots level, as they are now, are adequate and useful to teachers in improving classroom instruction, which can result in better learning outcomes among pupils? Whether the functions of inspectorate in its present form are adapted to the needs and conditions of today? Whether it has been able to respond positively to the emerging challenges of elementary education in the recent times and of its reforms? What kind of professional support does the inspectorate extend to the teachers?

As already pointed out, new structures have sprung up at the district and sub-district levels to provide academic support to teachers and schools following the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986). However, the traditional school inspectorate still performs the role of monitoring schools and teachers in the region. In the state of Karnataka, following the reorganization of the education department in 1995, the original Assistant Educational Office that existed at the taluk level has been upgraded to Block Education Office. An additional post of Block Education Officer and two posts of Educational Assistants have been created at the block-level office. The Assistant Educational Officer, earlier heading the Office of the Assistant Educational Officer, is currently placed below the BEO in the Block Education Office. The school inspectors, who are called the graduate inspectors of schools, are placed below the Assistant Educational Officer. The following chart indicates the position of school inspectors in the Block-level office.

These school inspectors are entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring all the primary schools and teachers therein, within the respective block. In addition, they are given the responsibility of pre-primary, non-formal and adult education centres in the block. The number of graduate inspectors of schools, who will be hereafter termed as SIs, the number of schools and number of teachers in the sample blocks selected for the study are presented in table 1. The figures in the table reflect the enormity of monitoring functions of the school inspector in terms of number of schools and teachers. On an average, each SI is expected to look after as many as 100 primary schools and around 200 teachers. To this could be added a few more pre-primary centres, adult and non-formal education centres and private primary schools as well.



One could very well imagine the predicament of the SI of giving individual attention to schools and teachers, which is very essential for elevating the current standards of teaching and learning in primary-schools.

Table 1: The strength of School Inspectors in the sample blocks of Kolar District

Name of the Block	No. of School Inspectors	No. of Primary Schools	No. of Teachers
Chickballapur	2	201	728
Chintamani	4	365	1005
Kolar	4	374	1331
Shidlaghatta	3	232	705
Kolar District Total	36	3389	9695

At the block level, the efficacy of school functioning in general and the teaching-learning practices in particular are routinely observed, monitored and guided by the school inspectors who are considered the vital links between the administrative machinery and the school teachers. In principle, one would expect the school inspectors, being in close proximity with schools and teachers, to effectively monitor the implementation of school level reforms, provide appropriate guidance and advice to teachers and in turn provide feedback to the policy makers and administrators about efficacy of any such reforms.

The Functions of the School Inspectorate

At the outset, the kinds of tasks the school inspectors are required to perform are examined from the prescribed job chart presented in the matrix below.

Job Chart of School Inspectors

- to conduct annual inspection of all lower primary schools falling under their jurisdiction
- to visit all lower and higher primary schools falling under their jurisdiction once in an year;
- to take action to start and run non-formal and Pre-Primary centers in their areas of jurisdiction. And to immediately submit the inspection report of such centers.
- Conducting Inspection of Primary, Pre-Primary and, Non-Formal Schools;

- To actively participate in the formation of Village Education and School Education Committees and in their functional activities;
- to report in their visit reports about attendance and enrolment of children in schools and taking action to improve enrolment and attendance after holding discussion with the village community;
- To create awareness among teachers and villagers through participation in activities of the School Complexes;
- To assist the Assistant Educational Officers and the Block Education Officers in their school visit and inspection activities;
- To assist the AEO and the BEO in proper and timely implementation of different plan programmes and incentive schemes;
- to collect data relating to all teachers falling under their area of operation and to encourage their creative innovations and identify the best teachers in this regard and recommend their names for awards.
- To actively participate in all educational, cultural and literary activities organized either by the BEO or by any other Block level officer;
- To strive hard for success of programmes relating to the Comprehensive Education Bill, Education for All by 2000 A.D, School Complexes and any other educational programme organized from time to time;
- To oversee timely submission of stipulated reports and records from schools falling under their jurisdiction;
- to distribute various funds, flags and other materials to the schools in their area of operation and to submit cash collection to the BEO and maintain records for the same;
- to take suitable action for organizing educational meetings, conference/school betterment committee in their area of operation;
- To successfully implement any educational activities proposed by the Zilla, Taluk Panchayat, Education department, Village Education Committee and School Education Committee.
- To carry out any other activity entrusted by the superior officers.

A careful scrutiny of the list of functions and duties suggests that apart from routine visit and inspection activities, they are also expected to discharge a multitude of tasks relating to development of primary education in the block. Being the immediate line authority of the education department, the onus of effectively implementing the reform and monitoring the same at the school level also falls on them. Thus the school inspectors have the horrendous task of looking after the entire affairs of the elementary education in their region. In addition, they are also expected to carry out any other activities that are entrusted to them by their superior officers. These superior officers may be from their own office or other offices above the block level. Strangely, this kind of superiors assigning (imposing) any other tasks apparently exists for school inspectors, suggesting the extent of subordination they are subjected to in the educational bureaucracy.

The job chart, in general does not specify the kind of roles the inspectors should perform during their visit functions excepting that they should check for attendance and enrolment of children and should work towards improving the same. Neither does the job chart in any way indicate the kind of professional support they are expected to provide to the teachers during their visits to schools. More specialized functions such as guiding, advising and counseling are also missing in the job chart. Overall the job chart points to the maintenance and controlling functions of the system rather than improving the system.

The visit and inspection functions in the job chart do imply that the school inspectors also monitor classroom teaching and learning as generally observed in the existing school inspection context. Furthermore, a major part of the visit reports submitted by the school inspectors contain observation of teaching learning activities in schools suggesting the main focus of school inspector's job during school visits. However, there is a need to make explicit in the job chart, the kinds of tasks school inspectors are expected to perform during school visits. In addition, in the face of the on going continuing education programme of primary school teachers across the country, it becomes important to include in the job chart the monitoring and follow-up of such training as well in schools.

Activities of School Inspectors: The Reality

The data regarding what exactly the inspectors do and the different kinds of tasks they perform as a part of their routine duties come from the official files and records available at the BEO's office. There are mainly three sources of data which indicate the activities of the school inspector. The first one is the proposed monthly *tour programme (TP)*, which every inspector prepares and submits to the BEO well in advance. This is also called as the *tentative tour diary*. The second one is the *consolidated report* of the activities carried out by the SI for every month during the academic year, which is again submitted to the BEO for perusal. This report will clearly indicate the day-wise activities of the school inspector for every month. The third one is the individual *school visit and inspection report*, which every inspector submits to the office after visiting schools.

The Tour Programme of the School Inspector

It is a common scene in every block education office to see his/her official chamber being adorned with a number of file boards hanging around the wall. Loose handwritten sheets are clipped to these file boards. If one takes a closer look, it reveals the monthly tentative tour programme of different officials in the office. Every school inspector prepares a monthly tentative tour programme (TP), which indicates his proposed visits during the working days of the month ahead. A date-wise official programme for the month indicating the total number of days in the month, number of working days, number of holidays, day-wise routine of visits to schools, inspection and halts in the village are generally found in the tour programme. It is noticed that by and large, visits to the schools form a major activity of the SI in the tentative tour programmes. And this forms about 75 per cent of the workload of the inspectors.

A detailed analysis of the tentative TP reveals the daily tasks of the SI in terms of different schools to be visited and the work in the office. Only when there is inspection, the diary suggests the name of the school, and otherwise the routine visits generally do not indicate the name of the school to be visited, leading to all sorts of speculation. As every SI is expected to visit all the Lower and Higher Primary Schools under his/her jurisdiction, the choice of schools and the day and time is left to the will of the inspector.

This is done according to convenience and further as routine visits are expected to be surprise ones, the name of the school is not disclosed. However, the TP is subsequently followed by a visit and inspection report for the month, which indicates the date, time and name of the school visited/inspected. This report is submitted to the BEO for his/her perusal.

It is noticed that the school visits generally overlap with *office work*. This *office work* refers to some work either in his/her own office or in any other office. And this work could either be scheduled or could just surface spontaneously depending on the context and urgency with which it has to be finished. In short this *office work* can keep the school inspector away from discharging his/her main duty, that is, of visiting the school. It was noticed that in some cases this kind of *office work* figured quite frequently in the monthly report of the school inspectors, pointing to considerable deviation from their normal function. As per the mandate given to the school inspectors, they are required to visit the office at least once a week during their regular visits to schools on other working days. Hence, one would normally expect more of school visits rather than office work by the SIs in their official submission of the report.

The Consolidated Official Report of the School Inspector

According to the TP, visit to the school is the major preoccupation of the school inspector. As already said, this forms about 75 per cent of his workload. However, quite contrary to this, the consolidated monthly official reports submitted by the SI to the BEO presents an altogether a different picture. Content analyses of such consolidated official reports have been done and the duties performed are broadly classified as academic, administrative and miscellaneous, depending on the kinds of tasks involved in each one of them. The same is presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1 Tasks performed by the school inspectors during their routine jobs

Academic/Professional	Administrative	Miscellaneous
<p>Visits to schools</p> <p>Training/Workshop-</p> <p>DPEP, MLL Bridge Course for VII Standard</p> <p>Examination, Orientation for preparation of question paper & evaluation of answer scripts for VII standard Examination</p> <p>Attending teachers' monthly meetings - Meeting of CRC Heads;</p>	<p>Examination duties as Chief Superintendent of Public Examinations of primary and secondary schools</p> <p>Invigilation for Type-writing examination; Vigilance Squad for S S L C / P U C / T C H examination;</p> <p>Navodaya Entrance examination; Custodian & distribution of VII standard question paper to school; Visit & supervision of VII standard Examination and Answer Paper Evaluation Centres; Office work; Orientation for Preparing EMIS format.</p> <p>Census Enumeration/CPE; EMIS Consolidation work; TBF/SWF - Receipts and distribution to schools; Textbook depot-Custodian & Disbursement;</p> <p>Conduct of enquiry</p> <p>Meeting with Revenue Officer for MMS</p> <p>Census enumeration training meetings. Informing schools about various submissions to be made to the BEO's office and the deadlines for submission;</p>	<p>Election duties - Returning officer Vote Counting; making arrangement for conduct of election;</p> <p>Health Inspection Camp; Pulse Polio Camp;</p> <p>Preparatory activities for various state and national festivals;</p> <p>Celebration Functions - Inauguration of New Schools; Independence Day; Teachers' Day; Gandhi Jayanti; Rajyotsava Day; Annual Day; Subhash Chandra Bose Birthday; Republic Day; Taluk-level Sports;</p> <p>Ration Card distribution with A.C.</p> <p>Meeting with D.C. for Gurubhavan fund</p> <p>Participation in community awareness building programme; participation in Maa-Beti Programme;</p> <p>DPEP-Hobli-Wise Meetings;</p>

It is clearly evident from the chart that the school inspectors are more preoccupied with administrative and miscellaneous duties rather than academic/professional duties. This is quite contrary to the picture presented in the TPs, which highlight the school visits as their major tasks. Such a departure in actual practice reveals the kind of leeway enjoyed by the SIs in strictly adhering to the expected roles. On probing it was noticed that they were invariably the first pick-ups to do periodical large-scale tasks and other occasional miscellaneous jobs whenever government machinery has to be pressed into service - for instance, for conduct of elections, examinations, census enumeration etc.,. Thus, the kind of roles currently performed by the school inspectors suggests that they are treated more like administrative service staff in the education department rather than as professional team, who can strengthen and enrich the academic standards of primary education.

Activities During Visits to Schools

Although SIs are engaged in more of administrative and miscellaneous duties, yet they do visit schools to monitor the performance of teachers. At this juncture it is worthwhile to examine what precisely the inspectors do during their visits to the schools? And how do these activities help the teacher and the school to improve the performance. It transpired during interviews that on an average every school inspector spends about half an hour in Lower Primary School and an hour or a little more in a Higher Primary School during each visit. The following tasks are found to be performed by him during visits:

Checking attendance of teachers; Checking attendance of children; Checking for Timetable, Allotment of lessons to teachers; Checking for maintenance of syllabus and Annual programme of work; Checking notes of lessons of teachers; Checking for maintenance of essential records and registers (in HPS); Checking children's learning.

It may be seen that the first six tasks pertain to maintaining function of the school system, whereas the last one pertains to the core activity performed by the school on the basis of which educational outcome will be assessed. Even though the SIs reported that they observe the classroom instruction during their routine visits, on further probing it was noticed that in reality they

neither observe the classroom teaching learning nor do they offer on-the-spot guidance for improvement of teaching. All that they do during their visits is to conduct a sample test of the abilities attained by children by asking them a few questions, on the basis of which they try to assess the teacher's performance. It is noticed that hardly 5 to 7 minutes are spent on classroom observation, during which time they attempt to assess the teacher's performance.

To the question as to why they do not observe classroom teaching during their visits, the reported reply was that on the day when they visit 2 to 3 schools, it was not possible to spend more time for classroom observation as travel alone consumed a higher proportion of time. Incidentally it may be noted that in the sample blocks selected for the study, the average ratio of schools and teachers works out to nearly 100 and 250 to 300 respectively making it absolutely impossible for the school inspector to monitor the same on an individual basis. Further, the vast spread of schools, the inaccessible terrain and lack of infrastructure facilities compound the problem of school visit functions. As a result, schools located in far off inaccessible terrains continue to languish in poor quality.

While the SIs firmly believed that testing a sample of learning outcome of children during their visits was an adequate measure of teaching functions, they also reported that whatever deficiency observed during visits came up for discussion in the monthly meetings of the teachers at the school complexes where they were resolved. Further, they justified that during the annual inspection of the school, they spent one whole day at the school and could obviously spend more time for classroom observation.

To a follow up the question as to what abilities do the SIs test during their visits and how do they test the same, the reply was they tested the basic 3Rs in Lower Primary Schools. They usually sample-tested language skills and mathematical abilities. Very rarely the other core subjects, such as science and social studies, received any priority in their monitoring. Thus testing of reading Kannada (regional language) words/sentences and solving simple additions and subtractions formed the routine tasks practiced by the inspectors during their visits to lower primary schools. However, at the higher primary schools, they made

attempts to test higher competencies of language like paragraph reading with comprehension and place value, fractions, etc, in mathematics. Sometimes they also tested competencies in science and social studies.

While the above analyses on the one hand clearly points to certain *standard stereotyping* in the school inspector's functions, on the other hand it also reveals certain inherent deficiencies in the school visit system, which have far ranging implications on selection, recruitment, education, training and orientation of the school inspectors towards contributing to quality improvement in primary education. Firstly, visit function is not a highly systematized activity. It lacks academic rigour and seriousness, with the result the school inspector's function apparently turns out to be very inadequate and inapt. Secondly, the school inspectors do not have sufficient orientation and training, which can enable them to perceive their roles with much more professionalism. As of now, the SIs are neither a separate professional cadre nor are they directly recruited for the post. They are drawn from the cadre of graduate head teachers in higher primary schools or assistant teachers from secondary schools either on selection or on promotion basis. The professional teacher training that they receive prior to their recruitment orients them towards certain administrative tasks to be discharged by the teachers in terms of following certain rules and regulations and maintenance of certain essential records. And this forms the basis for their school monitoring functions, while the core activities of monitoring classroom teaching learning receives lower priority.

Further, after their selection, there is no training imparted to them for the job. As a result, what they should do during school visits and how to observe classroom learning are rarely made known to them. Most importantly, the professional advising and counseling functions of the school inspectors are also never highlighted, resulting in each one firmly believing that he/she is a monitoring authority of the system with certain powers to control schools and teachers. The ethos of professionalism of school inspection assumes that the school inspectors should more often be visiting those schools, which reveal lower performance levels and provide adequate professional support to teachers in such schools through their advising and counseling functions rather than merely monitoring the maintenance aspects of the schools.

Visit Reports of the School Inspectors

As mentioned earlier, the SIs provide feedback in terms of submitting individual school visit reports to the BEO for taking necessary action. What exactly the SIs write in these visit reports and what kinds of follow up are initiated by the BEO would be of much relevance at this juncture. It is noticed that routine visit reports are available both in the form of hand written manuscripts as well as in the form of printed Proforma which are to be filled up by the SI every time he visits a school. Normally every visit report indicates the name of the school, place, time of visit by the SI with the following information:

- Is the school functioning?
- How many teachers are present?
- What is the strength and attendance of children grade-wise?
- Is there a well- prepared timetable?
- Is there an annual work plan prepared to the work allotment among teachers?
- Has every teacher prepared notes for the lessons he/she is teaching?
- Are textbooks distributed to all children in LPS?
- Are all records/registers maintained in the HPS

After filling up these items, mostly with a positive response, the SI would conclude the visit report with some general remarks of the following nature:

- Academic progress is average/satisfactory
- pay more attention to low achievers
- improve learning among class I children
- use teaching aids
- pay attention to school sanitation
- make children practice good handwriting
- write notes of lesson
- prepare an AWP (Annual Work Plan).

The above remarks, though reflecting identification of certain deficiencies in the school by the SI, the generic nature of the responses in terms of *giving instructions* suggest the controlling role performed by the SI. Besides, they do not reveal any kind of professional support received by the teacher at the time of visit. They are the *standard stereotypes* that flourish in almost all the visit reports. Neither do the subsequent visit reports speak about the action taken against the previous report. Apparently the visit reports are submitted more as a matter of ritualistic practice rather than contributing to improvement in the quality.

It is only recently that the visit report of the school inspector is made available in the form of prescribed printed format. Earlier, the handwritten manuscripts with carbon copies were submitted to the office by the school inspectors. In fact, it is a common sight to see the SIs engaged in preparing these reports laboriously when it has to be submitted to the office. Not only the visit reports, even the monthly tour dairies, consolidated visit reports, inspection reports, all used to be (and still are) written in their own hand. As a matter of fact, the amount of paperwork that the school inspectors are expected to do, one can only pity these officials. Thanks to the DPEP project for making certain luxuries available to these hapless officials. Printed proformas of visit reports are being made available to the SIs for filling up their visit reports. Some new features of this format are as follows:

1. class-wise strength and attendance of children in terms of caste and gender;
2. teachers i.e., sanctioned, vacant, working, on leave
3. supervision diary by HM periodical reporting of the teachers' and children's activities
4. action taken on the last visit report
5. teachers' teaching activities annual work plan, notes of lessons, use of teaching aids;
6. details on Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) schools use of MLL books, whether used as prescribed, MLL competencies mastered by children;
7. information on equipment, teaching aids and instructional kits, books etc.; construction and repair of classrooms; uniforms, textbook, mid-day meals programme, etc.

8. details on village education committees - formation, functioning and meetings
9. cash book and other records
10. suggestions and instructions (specific).

The Proforma requires that apart from giving certain general information about the school with regard to students and teachers, the SIs are expected to provide information in terms of 'Yes' or 'No' with regard to availability and use of various kinds of records, registers, MLL books, equipments and the VECs, etc. Further the Proforma also reveals an item on 'observation of teacher's teaching' and 'observation of children's learning attainments' and finally specific suggestions. It is noticed that items 1 and 2 in the format require filling up of mere facts and figures. Item 3 requires just 'yes' or 'no' response. The remaining items require some kind of qualitative response. However, in reality it is observed that even for these items the standard response of the SIs is a mere 'yes' or 'no', like 'being used', 'being maintained', 'being done' etc., which reiterate the 'maintenance' functions performed by the school inspectors rather than enabling functions. A few general observations made by the SIs in the visit report indicate the following:

- annual work plan and notes of lessons observed and instructions given;
- observed children's academic progress and instructions given;
- instructional aids are used by teachers;
- Village Education Committee (VEC) quarterly meetings held.

In addition to the general observations, the SIs are also expected to provide specific instructions for teachers to improve. A few sample responses are as follows:

- Competency-based and activity-based teaching to be done for classes 1 and 2;
- Every class has been visited and instructions have been given to the teachers. As there is a public examination for Grade 7, instructions are given to conduct special classes to improve pupils' academic performance;

- Children's progress was examined and instructions given to the teachers; competency-based and activity-based teaching to be done for grade 1 & 2;
- Academic progress report to be maintained regularly;
- Home work to be given for students and corrected.

It is noticed that by and large the last three items have stereotype response from the SI, indicating 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' performance. In case of unsatisfactory response, the only remark that is found is 'teacher should make an effort to enable children attain the required learning attainments'. Thus, mere reporting nature of the responses coupled with statements such as *instructions given* suggest that despite the format of the visit report undergoing change especially in the context of UEE, there seems to be not much of a change in the mindset and professional quality of the school inspectors as they continue to reveal the same old stereotypic responses, perpetuating status quoist tendencies. Thus in essence, the visit reports only attempt to conform to the standard stereotypes and do not seem to reflect the professional support extended to the teachers during the time of visit. On the other hand the report reflects the authoritative and controlling functions of the school inspectorate to maintain the school system in its place and not to enable the teachers to perform better.

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

The present paper is an attempt in the direction of understanding the kind of role played by the school inspectorate to facilitate the task of quality improvement in primary education. The study is set in the context of several national level interventions that are currently in operation in primary schools across the country in the direction of achieving universal primary education of 'good quality'. The study essentially looks at the supposedly major activity performed by the school inspectors in terms of school visits and tries to find out to what extent these activities play an enabling role to improve the performance of the school system. The data for the study are drawn from the official records from four Block Education Offices located in Kolar district of Karnataka State. The official job chart, tour diary, the routine visit reports, consolidated periodical visit reports of the School Inspectors are content analysed

to gather qualitative data and are further supplemented with data collected through interviews of the educational functionaries.

The fact that there is considerable deviation in terms of the proposed and actual activity of the school inspector points to rather the casual way in which the very role of the school inspector is perceived by the system. They are considered more as supporting staff of the bureaucratic machinery rather than as exclusive quality controlling professionals. Their functions are identified with controlling the system rather than enabling the system to change positively. It is indeed a sad commentary that the SIs who should form the vital link between the schools and administration and who ought to strengthen and enrich the standards of primary education are being misused to perform such mundane tasks of the education department. The variety of tasks the SIs is entrusted indicates that they are treated more like government servants meant to run the government machinery rather than professionals meant to improve the system. As a result their professional role in enabling teachers and schools gets undermined. This is further confirmed by the job chart of the school inspectors, which not only reflects the array of tasks assigned to them, but also the kind of subordination they are subjected to in the educational hierarchy. Such a glitch in the very conception of their role renders their main function of school visit less effective.

Structurally, their role is conceived in terms of maintaining *administrative link* to transmit the policy level decisions to operative levels (schools) and as such their role confines to merely making teachers and schools conform to certain '*standard norms*' rather than helping them to perform better. Their function within the framework of *normal context* is obviously crystallized in legislation, regulations and administrative procedures. *Professionally* they are expected to guide and advice teachers to advance further. Because of this kind of duality of roles in terms of their *administrative role* and *professional role*, they are often referred to as *Janus* figures facing two directions simultaneously, one towards the teachers and schools and the other towards policy makers and administrators, with the result they come to be regarded as very marginal figures both by teachers and administrators/policy makers (Bolam, 1976).

It is noticed taking into account the huge number of schools and teachers, the SI is required to monitor and the multiplicity of

mundane tasks he is required to discharge day in and day out, the core function of monitoring teacher performance and children's learning during school visits assume much less significance. This problem gets further compounded with the vast spread of schools, the inaccessible terrain, lack of infrastructure facilities and lack of transportation arrangements. As a result, schools located in far-flung areas continue to languish in poor quality because of insufficient monitoring.

The study also points to the controlling and maintaining functions of the school inspectors performed during their regular visits in terms of checking the system in its place as per certain standard norms, thus perpetuating the *status quoist* tendencies. Ritualistic practice of reporting school visits and conforming to *standard stereotypic* responses reflect the rigidity and inward looking nature of the school visit functions currently performed by the school inspectors. Despite the format of the visit report undergoing change, especially in the context of UEE, there seems to be not much of a change in the mindset and professional skills of the school inspectors as the *standard stereotypic* responses continue to thrive in these reports. Such restrictive systems of inspection which have lingered on from many years are found to curtail the school reform process and can even hold back teachers who are eager to change (Beeby, 1966). The visit reports rarely reveal any kind of professional support provided to the teachers, thus pointing to the system *maintenance* functions rather than *enabling* the system to perform better. However, with the major impetus given for quality improvement in primary education, one would expect a much more dynamic and productive role from the school inspectorate to facilitate the task of quality improvement.

Thus, while the study reveals on the one hand conforming to certain *standard stereotypes* in school inspector's functions, on the other hand it reveals certain inherent deficiencies in the school visit system, which have wide ranging implications on selection, recruitment, education, training and orientation of the school inspectors to contribute towards quality improvement in primary education. If school inspectors are change-process oriented, then their role should emphasize planning, designing, guiding, stimulating, goal setting and even manipulation of environmental factors to promote improved instructional practices (Harris 1985). However, the findings suggest that SIs are report writers rather than professionals who can lead and guide the teachers in the

reform process. It should be noted that in the context of current demands and challenges they should function more as teachers' colleagues and as champions of teachers. They ought to be giving constructive advice, encouragement to the teachers and to be pioneers of reform and advance. To perform such a role, what is urgently needed is the professional identity and a rigorous training to enhance professional skills. In fact, the need for training of the inspectors has been felt even before the reorganisation of the State, and it is observed that no less than the Inspector General of Education, Dr C R Reddy in 1918 had said that annual summer classes for inspecting officers lasting for one month is the first requisite of the inspectorial organization (Deve Gowda & Parameswaran 1985).

The study also points out the rather vague delineation of the job chart of the SIs. Hence, there is need to explicitly specify in the job chart the kind of tasks SIs are expected to perform during their school visits. Along with this, it is necessary to organize short-term orientation courses for the field-level education functionaries at various hierarchical levels to develop necessary perceptions and skills for the jobs. The visit function is not a highly systematized activity. It lacks both academic rigour and the professional touch, with the result the school inspector's function turns out to be inadequate and inapt. Besides, school inspectors do not have sufficient orientation and training which could enable them to perceive their roles with much more severity and professionalism. The SIs are not exposed to any kind of orientation before their induction into the profession. As a result, what he/she should do during school visits and how to observe classroom interaction are rarely made known to them. Therefore it would be worthwhile to organize an induction programme of 6 to 8 week's duration for all the SIs, with emphasis on academic supervision of schools. The major thrust of the orientation programme should be directed towards both content enrichment and pedagogical training. In addition, the induction programme should also highlight the professional, advising and counseling functions of the school inspectors.

It is also necessary that the SIs undergo recurrent training to update their professional skills. Recurrent training assumes special significance in the face of on-going pedagogical reforms in school education, with a major focus on quality improvement. Introduction of national level interventions like DPEP, Minimum

Levels of Learning (MLL) attainments have generated demand for recurrent training for all field-level educational functionaries, including school inspectors.

For effective monitoring of schools, it is very essential that the ratio of SI to schools and teachers be kept at a feasible level of 1:50 to 75 range rather than the current 1:100+ which seems to be too unwieldy for tendering the needed care and attention on individual schools. Alternatively, the existing grassroots participatory institutions, like the village education committees, school development/betterment committees may be equipped with managerial skills to oversee the day-to-day maintenance of the school programme.

Recently, in 2000, the Karnataka government abolished 500 posts of school inspectors and redesignated them as education coordinators. This was in lieu of delegating monitoring and supervision functions to new structures at the block and sub-block levels in the decentralized context. The process of selection and recruitment of education coordinators has just begun through fixing up criteria and also a qualifying test. While it is not sure what these education coordinators' role would be, yet, one cannot challenge the urgent need for developing professional skills of the grass-roots functionaries for effective monitoring of primary schools to achieve optimal efficiency. Subsequently, there has been a debate going around the professional circles of teachers challenging the government order abolishing the school inspectors' posts and redesignating them as education coordinators. Thus while the status of school inspectors continues to hang in air, the fact remains that lot more needs to be done to changing the process and practice of school monitoring. Regretfully, even the National Education Policy (1986) seems to be silent on changing the practice of school inspection in the direction of achieving universal primary education of good quality.

REFERENCES

- Baldev Mahajan, Goyal J C & Raghavendra Char, 1994 *Educational Administration in Karnataka - Structure, Processes and Future Prospects*, NIEPA, New Delhi.
- Beeby, C E, 1966 *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Blackie, John, 1970 - *Inspecting and the Inspectorate*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Bolam R, 1976 "The Types of Environment likely to favor the Active and Effective Participation of *Teachers in Educational Innovation*" in *Teachers as Innovators* OECD, Paris, p.35-36.
- Bolam R, 1986 '*School Inspectors and Advisers*' in *The International Encyclopedia of Education* (eds)
- Torsten Husen & T N Postelthwaite, Pergamon Press, pp 4429-4432.
- Deve Gowda & Parameswaran T R, 1985 - *History of Education in Mysore*, Department of Education & Youth Services, Government of Karnataka.
- Dodd, W A 1968 - *Primary School Inspection in New Countries*, OUP, Oxford
- Feyereisen, K V, et.al., 1970 - *Supervision and Curriculum Renewal A Systems Approach*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, NY
- Fuller, Bruce & Clarke, Prema 1994 - 'Raising School Effects While Ignoring Culture? Local Conditions and influence of Classroom Tools, Rules, and Pedagogy', *Review of Educational Research*, 51(4):119-57
- Godgil, A V 1976 - *Evaluation of the Concept and Practices of Inspection and Supervision of Secondary Schools in Maharashtra*, Ph.D Thesis. Poona University.
- Govinda & Varghese 1993 - *Increasing and Improving Quality of Basic Education: A Case Study of Madhya Pradesh*, IIEP, UNESCO, Paris.

Govinda R & Tapan Shajahan 1999 *Quality Education Through School-Based Supervision and Support: The Case of GSS Primary Schools in Bangladesh* IIEP, UNESCO, Paris

Harris B M 1985 *Supervisory Behaviour in Education*, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

IIEP, 1979 *The Contribution of School Inspection and Supervision to the Implementation of Reforms* by Lyons, Raymond F, UNESCO, Paris.

IIEP 1980, *The Role of Supervision in Improving the Teaching-learning Process in Nepal* by Nepal Ministry of Education , UNESCO, Paris.

IIEP 1984, *The Role of the School Inspectorate in Plan Implementation: A Systemic Approach* by Carlos E. Olivera, UNESCO, Paris.

Kumar, Krishna, 1991 *Political Agenda of Education-A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*, Sage, New Delhi

Lockheed Marlaine et.al 1991 *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries*, WB, Washington

Lyons & R A Pritchard, 1976 - *Primary School Inspection: A Supportive Service for Education*, IIEP, Paris

Maclaine, A G 1973 - 'An Evaluation of the System of Inspection in Australian State Schools', *Journal of Educational Administration*, 11:22-32

Mohanty, B, 1990 - *School Administration and Supervision*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi.

National Education Policy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1986

NCERT, 1969 - *Report of the Study Team on Supervision and Inspection*, New Delhi

NIEPA, 1979- *Administration of Elementary Education in Orissa*, New Delhi

The World Bank, 1977 - *Primary Education in India*, The IBRD, WB, Washington, D.C.

The World Bank , 1999 *Education Sector Strategy* The IBRD, Washington, D.C.

Ushadevi, M D, 1996 - *Pre-Service Teacher Training for Elementary Education*, ISEC, Mimeo

Verspoor Adrian *Pathways to Change: Improving the Quality of Education in Developing Countries* 1989

Willard R. Lane et.al, 1970 *Foundations of Educational Administration A Behavioural Analysis*, The Macmillan Co, London.

Wolfensohn James D, 1999 World Bank President in the Foreword on 'The Vision: Quality Education for All' in the *Education Sector Strategy*, The IBRD, Washington, D.C.