

SCHOOL INSPECTION: PROSPECT AND POTENTIAL TOWARDS LEADERSHIP GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

School inspection has become the primary regularity to actualize quality improvement. In Malaysia, the requirement towards overall quality improvement in schools has created a demand for greater quality assurance. This is to secure a dynamic monitoring mechanism in overseeing organizational efficiency as well as accountability in schools. The Malaysian School Inspectorate (Jemaah Nazir, hereafter) is responsible to safeguard a sustainable standard of quality education through the use of 'Standards for Quality Education in Malaysia' (SKPMg2, hereafter). With reference to leadership, inspection is valuable to review the status and position of the school to drive leaders towards academic and administrative improvements. This study examined views of school leaders on the current practices of school inspection in Malaysian schools. A convergence parallel research design of mixed-methods approach was utilized to address the research questions. Two groups of respondents were involved in the study consisting of school and instructional leaders as well as inspectors. Findings established that a majority of school and instructional leaders were convinced with the current conduct of school inspection where it has assisted schools to move forward towards the current paradigm shift. The conduct of school inspection using SKPMg2 as a monitoring reference was affirmatively well-received by leaders. This study has implications at the school leadership policy, training and development, administrative, as well as research level. It additionally demonstrated the need for urgent and specific actions to elevate leadership performance of instructional leaders in schools.

Key Words: School Inspection, Standards for Quality Education in Malaysia (SKPMg2), Leadership Growth, Leadership Performance.

INTRODUCTION

For many years, Malaysia has established a scientific school inspection approach as a major mechanism for monitoring and promoting the quality of schools. School inspection involved the act of collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of education in schools and to suggest solutions for problems encountered. It aims to ascertain current processes and procedures and offer suggestions for improvements. Consequentially, school inspection offers the opportunity for effective and direct feedback to school leaders so that educational policies and initiatives are implemented accordingly in schools (McGlynn & Stalker, 1995).

At present, there exists a growing necessity in school inspection and this is justified by the current trend in education where extended autonomy are trusted to leaders in schools. The fact that schools are now given more freedom in terms of decision making has raised an equally greater demand for accountability requiring evaluation procedures to ensure standards of quality and equity across the education system are attained and maintained. As such, school inspection is inextricably linked with quality which is viewed as a multi-dimensional concept comprising three interrelated dimensions as follows:

- I. The quality of the human and material resources available or inputs.

- II. The quality of the management and teaching/learning processes taking place or processes.
- III. The quality of the results or outcomes.

School Inspection as a Major Form of Monitoring Mechanism in Malaysia

The practice of school inspection involves an external assessment that covers the overall aspects of a school and their impact upon student learning. School Inspection in Malaysia is exclusively operated by inspectors appointed by the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools (*Jemaah Nazir*). The Education Act 1996 prescribes the responsibility of the Chief Inspector to ensure that an adequate standard of teaching is developed and maintained in educational institutions. Pursuant to this, the inspectorate of schools are responsible to appraise the nature, purpose, structure, functions and operations of the school system and outcomes.

The appraisal of the school system is critical as changes within and without the system inevitably affect, effect and infect the total functioning of the system, and consequently its product. For this reason, facts about the health status of the school system, and how the system functions, are needed to determine factors affecting the behavior of the system. Consequently, these factors determine the trend of quality standards of education and its products of whether it is progressing as scheduled or regressing or remains stubbornly unchanged. This natural cycle functions through learning from feedback of the system enabling stakeholders, school leaders and teachers to capture relevant information, knowledge and predictive intelligence to forecast the productivity and quality standards of the school system in terms of return on investment. Thereby, the Inspectorate of Schools conducts inspections to ensure schools as the institution of quality learning and teaching conform to the current policies of the MOE (Malaysian Ministry of Education)

In recent years, the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools enforced the Standard of Quality Education in Malaysian Schools (*SKPMg2*) to help schools engage in school self-evaluation (SSE). The *SKPMg2* is implemented nationwide for SSE and it is a form of organizational sensing mechanism for a school to identify issues, problems and challenges that hinder its performance and accomplishments. With this intention, schools need to reflect on their functions and actions before determining their position in the ranking system at that point of time. The information derived from the SSE practice will then be utilized by the school to formulate its way for improvement and development plan. The formulation of *SKPMg2* was informed by General Systems Theory (GST), viewing the school as a social system. As a system, it is structured by sub-systems, each with specific functions interacting and interfacing symbiotically to achieve the prescribed standards signifying that a system is never static. For the school as a system to accomplish its mission or purpose, it has to be engineered to take deliberate control of its own potential and capacity development to realize and actualize itself for higher stages of auto-dynamic stability.

Past studies on school inspection established clear evidence on the positive impact on the quality of school leaders and teachers (Mathwes & Sammons, 2004). Some studies also confirmed that school inspection has positive effects teachers and leaders' professional development (Webb et al., 1998). In Malaysia, the introduction of a systematic and comprehensive mechanism to set a standard of quality education by the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools is seen to be timely and appropriate. This monitoring mechanism known as *SKPMg2* was extensively utilized by the Inspectorate of Schools and other departments in the MOE to inspect and evaluate schools. Schools, on the other hand, employed *SKPMg2* as the instrument for SSE to identify their strengths, weaknesses and issues to pave their way towards further

improvement.

a. Attributes and Performance of School Leaders

Leadership Attributes is a noteworthy variable the study focuses on as this concept has been identified with high performing leadership and school improvement. As schools and leaders are now being held accountable for students' attainment and achieving high standards in education, strong and profound leadership attributes are fundamental to ensure favourable outcomes. Crawford and Torgesen (2006) highlighted several leadership attributes renowned in the leadership of high-performing schools. These critical qualities include leaders' eminent knowledge, affirmative belief, extensive experience and sufficient training on the innumerable prominence of leadership facets. Numerous studies on the field of effective leadership have also focussed on the importance of similar key factors of knowledge, belief, experience and training (Amin & Abdul Razak, 2008; Leithwood et al., 1994; Hughes et al., 1993).

A salient characteristics of leadership attributes that affect school performance have been itemized in many studies on the trend of educational leadership traits. Within this province, MacBeath (2006) established 25 leadership traits resulting in successful leadership performance in schools. An exhaustive literature review revealed that the leadership traits identified derived from similar key determining factors which were complementary in achieving two focal objectives in effective organizational goals (Leithwood et al, 2008). This substantial analysis of literature yielded six leadership traits that put forth the notion of high impact school leadership model: personal leadership, managerial leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership and value-based leadership. In the Malaysian context, the competencies of each leadership trait were condensed into a generic competency fitting the local call for educational leadership and management (Ruhaya et al., 2006).

In the case of Malaysian schools, school leadership must strive to be able to transform and adapt in order to prepare itself to meet the higher standards and expectations expected now by the stakeholders in terms of the quality of education. "As the pressure for schools to show increases in student achievement builds up, there has been increased emphasis on instructional leadership, which encompasses all the activities and initiatives a leader can do to improve student learning", (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 69). This is seen at par with the recent development in the Malaysian education scene where the fifth shift of The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) emphasised instructional leadership to ensure high-performing school leaders in every school.

In recent years, apart from the fact that schools are becoming increasingly complex with accountability pressing schools to do more for less, the situation has become even more challenging for school leaders, who are immersed in a highly centralised, hierarchical bureaucracy (Abdul Rahman, 2010). School leaders are made responsible for the ultimate accountability of their school outcomes, in facilitating school leadership and empowering their teams towards improved school outcomes.

Susceptible with the latest educational demands of organisational developments and constantly changing roles, school leaders are liable with the leadership predicament of being constrained to the rigidity of organisational and policy structures are forced into a 'new' kind of leadership. They can no longer confine themselves to one prescribed framework of performance, but need to be proactive in engaging the participation of all school stakeholders to shape and manage the future of their schools. As a result, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had transformed and reconceptualised the shape of its educational system by revising their

educational policies to strengthen schools' capacity to manage change.

With the target of transforming Malaysian school leaders for the attainment of high performance leadership and current need to re-examine the existing system in the practice of school inspection, the Malaysian School of Inspectorate has proactively amend and revamp the *SKPMg2* to meet the stipulations of current educational policies and initiatives as well as to get schools to be well-engaged with the monitoring tool. However, the extent to which the tool plays a part in the overall system especially towards strengthening the capabilities of Malaysian school leaders still need to be scientifically investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) was implemented to empower sustainable transformation of the education system (Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani, 2013, p. 23). The Blueprint reflects the government's initiatives to formulate a comprehensive transformational plan which is prominently identified by its '11 shifts', aimed at elevating the country's education system (The STAR, 2 Sep 2013). Among the major impacts envisioned by the Blueprint is established in 'Shift 5' focused on enhancing the quality of school leadership and ensuring high performing school leaders in schools. It highlights strategic approaches aimed at equipping all schools with high-performing school leaders, who will adopt a more refined accountability for improving student outcomes (Malaysian Education Blueprint, p. E-27). Therefore, school leaders must be adequately trained to adapt to this current requirement of becoming effective leaders who can positively influence teachers' instructional practice to subsequently elevate student achievement in Malaysian schools.

Past studies on school inspection have found clear evidence on the positive impact of school inspection on the quality of school leaders and teachers (Mathwes & Sammons, 2004). Some studies also confirm that school inspection has positive effects teachers and leaders' professional development (Webb et al., 1998). In Malaysia, the introduction of *SKPMg2* served as a systematic and comprehensive mechanism to set a standard of quality education by the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools.

The intensified awareness on the importance of leadership performance in Malaysian schools has resulted in a flurry of research pursuits in the last decade. At the outset, studies on leadership performance focused on defining the broad concept of leadership and its identified parameters. While research in this pertinent area is still ongoing, recently, there have also been attempts to apply the concept of leadership performance to other settings such as schools, higher institutions and educational organizations. More recently, additional attempts have also been carried out to determine the factors that affect leadership performance and its dimensions as discussed earlier.

Numerous studies on leadership performance have indicated that in most enquiries, this factor was found to be related to various variables. However, in the Malaysian setting, rigorous review of past literature has indicated the lack of an attempt to relate the variables of Leadership Performance with School Inspection. For that reason, it is imperative that these variables and factors be further explored in order to identify which variables and dimensions are influential if intervention measures are to be proposed. Research findings on school effectiveness have essentially indicated that leadership performance is a context and task-specific construct. This signals that previous findings lack the accuracy to generalize findings on leadership performance

in a specified domain. This further implies that research into leadership performance should be broadened to include as many different contexts and variables as possible to penetrate and interpret other possible phenomenon.

Apart from the pressing issues mentioned above, Malaysian schools have also struggled with unresolved impediments as highlighted by local educators and academicians. These issues include requirements related to current initiatives in education, trends on school autonomy and public accountability as well as demands regarding student outcomes. In view of these challenges, it is crucial for Malaysian's school leaders as managers of the schools to be equipped with relevant support through the practice of school inspection and furnished with pertinent substantiating leadership attributes for the successful management of their respective schools. While the variables of school inspection and leadership attributes are not the exclusive constituent needed by school leaders for the enhancement of leadership performance, their existence is undoubtedly significant if school leaders are to be transformed into effective problem solvers and managers.

Various studies have been conducted with the aim of measuring the significant influence of school inspection and other attributes of leadership in boosting school improvement. Past studies on school inspection claim that these have no direct impact on leadership performance, while other literature argues that school inspection has negative impacts on leadership and management quality (Rosenthal, 2004). Also, studies have shown that the impact of school inspection on leadership performance is limited (Earley, 1998; Ehren & Visscher, 2006). Still more studies claim that school inspection has no positive impact on leadership qualities among school leaders (Webb et al., 1998). Moreover, a study in Dubai found that school inspection has no positive impact on teachers and school leaders' emotions (Swan, 2014) and diverts focus from their core business of teaching and managing in order to impress the inspector and supervisor (Webb et al., 1998).

Most of these studies have been conducted in developed countries such as the UK, Sweden, and Germany (Caudra & Thacker, 2014; Swan, 2014). A review of the literature reveals that not many studies have been conducted in Malaysia with regard to the role of school inspection and leadership attributes in enhancing high performance leadership among leaders in Malaysian schools. Tied in with this is the premise that the variable of School Inspection is suffering from dimensionality issues (Rosenthal, 2004). Over the years, a great number of studies across various organizations have indicated that school inspection is a multidimensional construct (Ehren & Visscher, 2006). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the variables of School Inspection, Leadership Attributes and Leadership Performance to discern the interconnectedness of each of these three variables and its corresponding dimensions. Failure to understand how each dimension affects leadership performance could hinder any intervention efforts targeted towards raising the level of improvement in the school setting.

METHODOLOGY

The research design involves a mixed-methods approach combining both data analyses-quantitative and qualitative, to provide a more comprehensive and overall understanding of the phenomena under study (Noorzan & Page, 2010). In due course, the process of triangulation, involving two different data sets – the quantitative survey questionnaire and the qualitative interview, will be through cross-verification, to assure the accuracy of data.

Based on the conceptual framework of the study, a convergent parallel design of the mixed-method approach has been deemed as the most suitable methodology as it utilized both quantitative and qualitative investigations. Within this design, data was collected concurrently and analysed in two independent strands of quantitative and qualitative data. Following this, the results were merged by comparing and relating to obtain the overall interpretation to look for elements of convergence, divergence, contradictions or relationships of two sources of data.

Pertaining to this study, School Leaders make reference to the appointed school principal, school head, senior assistants and head of departments or other individuals who is an employee or officer of a secondary or primary school. They are responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations.

Instructional Leaders are pertinent to managers of the curriculum and instruction in schools. In this study, the concept of Instructional Leaders is stretched out to include senior teachers and head of panels to emphasize distributed and shared empowerment among school staff. Instructional Leaders cover for setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote students learning and growth.

In the present study, a total of 120 respondents from different samples of High Performing Schools took part in this research enquiry and they conclusively comprised as the sample of this study. These respondents involved school and instructional leaders consisting of school head and principal, senior assistants, head of departments, head of panels, as well as senior teachers from the sample schools.

The instruments of the study are divided into two categories based on the selected mix-method design. The quantitative data was gathered using one set of questionnaires designed for school leaders containing items covering the variables of:

1. Practices of School Inspection (SI)
2. Leadership Performance (LP)
3. Leadership Attributes (LA)

On the other hand, the qualitative data was gathered using a set of open-ended questions included in the set of questionnaires as well as in the semi structured interviews for school leaders and school inspectors.

Data was first analysed employing the quantitative approach with descriptive statistics utilized to generally describe the nature of School Inspection and Leadership Performance indicators representing the first and second research questions respectively. Data was initially analysed utilizing frequencies distribution and percentages. Descriptive statistics were used to measure central tendency in a form of means and dispersion in a form of range as in standard deviation.

Qualitative method was additionally employed in the MM design for these first research question. Qualitative data for the first research question targeted for school and instructional leaders was acquired through 13 open-ended questions focusing on the variables under investigation such as School Inspection. The goals were mainly to triangulate the quantitative findings as well as to verify and strengthen the discovered manners of school leaders' view on the current conduct of School Inspection.

FINDINGS

The overall findings present both perspectives of school leaders and school inspectors on the conduct and current practices of school inspection.

Quantitative Findings: School Leaders and Instructional Leaders' Satisfaction on the Nature of School Inspection

The study found that a total of 120 respondents agreed with the dimension of School Leaders' and Instructional Leaders Satisfaction of the practice of school inspection hence suggesting that a majority of school leaders were satisfied with the current conduct of school inspection. The findings further exhibited school leaders' agreement to all three items respectively. Overall, the item 'School Inspection helps the school to move forward' secured the highest mean of 4.03. On the other hand, the item 'School inspection complemented the school self-evaluation using *SKPMg2*' fell to the lowest agreement with mean score of 3.73.

This study sought to investigate school and instructional leaders' level of satisfaction on the current practice of school inspection. The findings from the quantitative data revealed that overall school inspectors were assisting leaders on the continuous efforts towards paradigm shifting in schools. This study established that leaders' complacency with regards to the improvement to the overall school management. However, this current study has additionally noted on the demand for school inspections to provide practical and functional assistance to leaders to implement SSE effectively.

The Conduct of Inspection Using Standard 1 in *SKPMg2*

School and instructional leaders revealed their views as to their agreement on the current conduct of school inspection. It was indicated that majority of leaders were in agreement with all items with the overall mean score of 3.73 signifying approval on the current activities engaged by the Malaysian School of Inspectorate. The item of the statement 'I am able to contribute to the requirements of inspection based on Standard 1 in *SKPMg2*' gained the highest mean score suggesting school leaders' understanding of the requirements highlighted in Standard 1 in enhancing leadership performance ($M=4.04$, $SD=.760$) While the least preferred items gained the mean score of 3.50 signifying that 'The post school inspection commentary fairly and accurately reflect the most important issues for the school'. This further implied that school inspectors be obliged to examine the current exercise so that feedback and commentary given to schools describe the actual impediment needed to be addressed.

The findings above lead to the belief that the conduct of school inspection with the use of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) was affirmatively well-received by school and instructional leaders. The inspection instrument has sufficiently furnished leaders the much-needed professional support as to how to manage the leadership aspect in the most efficient way. To conclude, it is apparent that leaders admitted the beneficial use of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) in providing professional support and as the roadmap to overcome the many hindrances in sustaining high leadership performance. The findings of the current study also highlighted on the need for the school inspectorate to seek for relevant course of action in order to accurately diagnose the most critical impediment encountered by schools.

Qualitative Findings: School Leaders and Instructional Leaders' View on the Nature of School Inspection

Exploration into the qualitative data revealed and supported the main findings achieved from the quantitative data discussed in this earlier section. The qualitative data derived from the interviews exhibited agreement on the role of school inspection in providing constructive and practical guidelines as well as recommendations to intensify instructional leadership skills.

Hence, the challenge of the school inspectors in Malaysia is to come up with an effective approach on how to enhance instructional leadership amongst leaders. The role of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) as a tool to further boost instructional leadership amongst school leaders should be profoundly emphasised and inculcated for greater attainment in leadership practices. This indicated the need for the Malaysian School of Inspectorate to reflect on their prime role to promote school improvement by providing professional support and not mere critics that could deteriorate trust and confidence amongst school leaders. Past literature also suggested that if school inspection is striving towards school improvement, there should be a balanced incorporation of constructive judgement and recommendations for school leaders to have the opportunity to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses.

School and instructional leaders displayed awareness of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) which is structured in the forms of standards and critical elements based on various weightage of scorings. It was also indicated that teachers and head of departments in schools were aware of the functionality of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) in helping them manage their assigned duties. The study also investigated on school and instructional leaders' satisfaction in the conduct and use of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) as the tool to enhance leadership performance. The findings reported that school leaders and teachers were aware and acquainted with the inspection instrument. When leaders were asked about the negative effects caused by the practice of school inspection, school leaders highlighted on the adverse impact of blaming the school or holding the school responsible for any of the issue detected. Additionally, the unfavourable effect also included the school routine disruptions caused by school inspection.

Besides the issue of negative impact caused by school inspection, leaders also revealed on how reports produced by the Malaysian School of Inspectorate are received in their schools. This is to investigate whether or not areas of school management and leadership have changed as a result of the inspection report. This study further sought to explore how are the acceptance of the inspection reports amongst school leaders and instructional leaders. The qualitative data above indicated that majority leaders accepted the relevance of the inspection reports towards the betterment of their respective schools. This perception was due to the fact that, inspection reports indicate on the strengths and weaknesses based on a very comprehensive data-based collection of data and evidences.

Findings of this study suggested that it is a challenge for school inspectors to meet the need of school and instructional leaders to boost the current practice of school inspection. It is of great importance to make leaders perceive the school inspectorate as their critical friends so that the paramount aim to facilitate school improvement through efficacious leadership could be attained. As put forth, school inspection entails making evaluation about the significant value of what is being observed, collected and reported. This further implies that the practice of school inspection should not be merely based on the means of judging the school's compliance with the MOE initiatives but should be more developmental.

It can be deduced that although majority of school and instructional leaders acknowledged that the practice of school inspection can facilitate overall school improvement and advancement, there are persistent demands for the inspectors to guide the schools to get to the bottom of the inspection tool. Moreover, continuous support and guidance are also indispensable in helping the school leaders to fathom and digest the inspection instrument for them to be able to use it competently. MacBeath (2006) declared that in order for leaders to have a standardised perspective of school inspection, there is a need for leaders to master the instrument as it provides the necessary criteria that can aid overall comprehension. It was further stressed by MacBeath (2006) on the school mastery of self-evaluation (SSE) to serve as the eminent orientation that helps school and instructional leaders to set a comparative standardised perspective towards the overall practice of school inspection.

DISCUSSION

Findings on School and Instructional Leaders' Satisfaction on the Current Practice of School Inspection revealed that leaders were moderately satisfied with the overall conduct of school inspection. However, despite the moderate rating in the overall practice of school inspection, leaders agreed on the role of school inspection in helping school to move forward which suggested that they were still highly convinced with its relevance.

Qualitative findings obtained from a set of semi-structured interview supported the main findings in this dimension. In the light of school and instructional leaders' satisfaction regarding the current practice of inspection in the Malaysian schools, the qualitative data exhibited ratification the role of school inspectors to provide practical guidelines to enhance instructional leadership in schools. It was also noted by school and instructional leaders the non-existence of the element of bias or impartiality in the conduct of inspections. On a different note, school leaders asserted concern on the element of practicality in the conduct of school inspection which can potentially affect the neutral stance undertaken by inspectors. This is pertaining to the need for the school inspectorate to be more attentive and tactful when coming across with issues or deficiencies beyond the control of the school.

Findings on the Conduct of Inspection using Standard 1 in *SKPMg2* dimension indicated that school and instructional leaders were reasonably confident in the utilization of the inspection tool to further improve the management of their schools. The study identified that 99.2% of leaders were contented with their understanding on the use of Standard 1 in *SKPMg2* and 95.8% were eminently confident with the capacity of school inspectors to exercise the tool in school inspections to boost school improvement. Qualitative findings derived from the interviews consistently supported the quantitative findings in confirming leaders' awareness on the benefit and necessity of using Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) towards transformation to a highly effective school. The study noted that similar literacy and adeptness were shared by school and instructional leaders of their respective schools. The findings also signified leaders' ratification on the relevance and feasibility of reports produced by school inspectors. This was due to the empirical facts that reports were meticulously drawn from a comprehensive data-based collection and rigorously grounded on existing evidences.

On a different standpoint, school and instructional leaders voiced their concerns on the unfavourable side effects of routine disruptions caused by school inspections based on the stringent requirement outlined in the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*). The adverse impact of holding the

school responsible for every inadequacy detected due to the unfulfillment of the specification in Standard 1 was also put forth by leaders. Taking everything into consideration, it can be deduced that the practice of school inspection cannot be set far apart from the occurrence of unfavourable effects. For that reason, leaders articulated measures of enhancement with reference to the added duration of school inspection as well as follow-up inspection to retain the exceptional standard of school improvement preceding every inspection.

With evidence suggesting the prominence of school inspection as the vital tool to achieve excellence in leadership performance (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Tripp, 1992; Drukker, 1991), the study identified school leaders' satisfaction on the current conduct of school inspection in support of the school's effort to move forward. The study further revealed that the utilization of the inspection tool and mechanism was affirmatively well-received by school leaders as beneficial in assisting schools to map their development towards students' attainment. These findings are in line with OFSTED (1993) who contends that the main purpose of school inspection is to boost school improvement through a structured process of observation, data collection and evaluation to identify priorities for action and to enlighten about the school's areas of strengths and weaknesses.

This positive effect however raises some questions about the overwhelming stress loads brought in by school inspection to schools. With the numerous generally known benefits secured during and after an inspection as well as having the toolkit (*SKPMg2*) widely distributed and studied, the 'fear' of inspection prevails. In this pertinent point of consideration, it is wise to reflect on past studies that reported on school leaders and teachers perceptions of inspection feedback as being too critical (Shaw et al., 1995), but contrarily other studies argued that how a school reacts to inspection largely be determined by the culture imprinted by their leaders (OFSTED, 1994). In reality, the shared values and beliefs of the people in an organization represents the essence of that particular organization (McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). Therefore, school leaders need to be well informed on the school's existing ideology on the practice of inspection so that adaptation values could be demonstrated and reinforced. This is to support teachers to cope with external pressure and the demand to change. OFSTED (2012) proposed that in adapting to inspection, school leaders should be able to manage the short-term crisis brought in by inspection to keep away from a damaging long-term culture shift in the school. With reference to the findings of this current study, the satisfactory acceptance of the current conduct of school inspection in Malaysia indicates that as school inspection is becoming more familiar and is reviewed to be more accommodating rather than threatening, school and instructional leaders will find the results of evaluation to be valuable. However, this becomes the mutual respect generated in the duration of inspection. Wilcox (2000) certified that school inspection plays a crucial role towards quality education specifically in the domains of leadership enhancement as well as the development of teachers' pedagogical skills. Also, Barret (2005) highlighted the importance of feedback and guidance provided by school inspectors which contribute towards professional development of school leaders and instructional leaders in keeping abreast with the current educational reforms and initiatives.

Fundamentally, school and instructional leaders' contentment on the current conduct of inspection in Malaysian schools implied the fact how inspection has changed and reformed over recent years from checking compliance to evaluating educational practices and output of the schools. On top of that, the metamorphose of inspection also includes the transformation from external monitoring to increased emphasis on SSE school. This has positively enabled leaders to respond to and support the changes the national educational reforms. This will further assist in assuring a rapid rise of inspection as a school governance mechanism. These crucial findings go

on to suggest the successful venture of the organization in conceptualizing numerous features of school inspection in the Malaysian setting to achieve the desired range of outcomes focusing to the evolution of the toolkit of inspection instruments (SKPMg2).

On a different note, the findings also signified a necessity for inspectors to guide school and instructional leaders on the application and usage of *SKPMg2* for the smooth execution of SSE and betterment of school's management. This is supported by MacBeath and Martimore (2001); Wilcox (2000) and Ehren and Visscher (2008) in stating that the crucial value of an effective inspection depended heavily on the guided and supported plan of actions towards school improvement. In the same vein, Wilcox (2000) proposed that in order to achieve the quality education, leaders in schools needed to be closely guided to use the inspection mechanism to track down on their current progress as well as identify problematic areas to be resolved and improved.

Nonetheless, school and instructional leaders' satisfaction on the conduct of school inspection involved the necessity to be elevated in enabling schools to achieve the greater benefits of the inspection. Parallel to this, Tripp (1992) highlighted on the dominance of Critical Theory by Habermas to establish the importance of providing sufficient knowledge to school leaders and teachers on the mechanism of inspection. In essence, the Critical theory conveys the significance of human self-awareness, consciousness and recognition of problems. Thus, empirical findings from the current study proclaimed on leaders' need to be comprehensively furnished with professional support on the use of the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) to empower leadership management in the most efficient way.

The findings on school and instructional leaders' satisfaction on the current practice of school inspection have disclosed leaders' contentedness on the role of school inspectors to impart practical guidelines in enhancing leadership performance. The qualitative findings had further distinguished area of concern in the current practice of inspection regarding the attentiveness of school inspectors in differentiating between school's deficiencies which are under and beyond the control of the respective schools. According to Drukker (1991), it is of great importance for school inspectors to be able to have a total awareness of the capability, freedom, strengths and weakness of school leaders and teachers to provide a relevant and meaningful solutions in leadership difficulties. Leew (2002) further asserted that the Critical Theory provides the basic ground for school inspectors in allowing for creativity to be inculcated among leaders and teachers in schools which will benefit towards students' attainment in the long run.

Findings on the conduct of school inspection utilizing the Standard 1 (*SKPMg2*) indicated school and instructional leaders' reasonable confidence on the use of the inspection tool to elevate school management. Pertinent to this, Ehren and Visscher (2008) noted that schools are obliged to set an action plan based on inspection findings and recommendations in order to upgrade leadership, management as well as teaching and learning aspects. On this matter, it was noted that the tool of inspection in Malaysia has adopted a set of criteria which included leadership and management, infrastructure, teaching and learning as well as co-curricular aspects. It was also identified that leaders were confident with their knowledge and understanding on the use of the inspection mechanism and the capability of school inspectors to exercise the inspection tool in schools. These findings to a greater extent suggested that the inspection toolkit of *SKPMg2* has accomplished in generally specifying in detail the numerous ranges of evidence on which school inspectors will draw their evaluation on. For this reason, school and instructional leaders are likely to gain benefit and guidance by being accustomed to the explicit methods in the form of specific schedules contained in the *SKPMg2*.

In relation to the above, past studies have shown that the school inspection system contributed positively to the quality of education specifically in school's leadership and performance (Wilcox, 2000; Tymms et al., 2005; Sammons, 2006). It was further asserted that school inspection has proven to bring positive improvements on students' achievement, school leaders' performances, provision of teaching and learning as well teachers' development (Sammons, 2006). Above all, the outputs derived based on the tool of inspection as in the Standard 1 are valued as the prominent sources of a database. With appropriate knowledge and skill, the Standard 1 may be employed as a tool to monitor or evaluate the progress of the school as well for the purpose of school accountability. As Landwehr (2011) pointed out, the function of accountability provides a reason for school inspection, since school improvement can also be possibly more effective to be achieved through school self-evaluation (SSE) (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004; Nevo, 2001).

Parallel to the quantitative findings above, the qualitative findings demonstrated school and instructional leaders' awareness on the virtue of Standard 1 in helping to boost transformation in their schools. Similar consciousness and assimilation were also shared by teachers and the school community which have assisted the smooth incorporation of the inspection tool in the conduct of school management. To a certain extent, this findings pointed out that adequate knowledge of research into fields related to inspection will be useful to school leaders as well as inspectors. To begin with, it will prepare leaders and inspectors on some of the methodological risks involved in the process of evaluation. Next, it may assist school inspectors in identifying methods and techniques which could cause unnecessary risks and therefore could be adapted immediately to avoid further complication. Perhaps it is prudent to refer to studies conducted by the inspectorates of OFSTED who found that the comprehension and appropriate use of such inspection tool could help in the improvement of the education quality (Matthews & Sammons, 2004). This was especially evident during the conduct of school inspection where leaders were notified of the inspection findings by indicating aspects that do not meet the standards and constructive feedback were conveyed for the purpose of improvement.

Besides the favourable reception on the inspection tool, qualitative findings also indicated school and instructional leaders' rectification on the feasibility and relevance of reports assembled by school inspectors during the conduct of school inspection. The results were attributable to the verifiable fact that reports of the inspectors were meticulously drawn from a comprehensive and rigorous data-based collection method. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) interpreted the meticulous approach adopted in school inspection served as an additional important mechanism and process qualities may positively affect the leadership quality in schools which in turn will help improve students' achievement. Therefore, studies of MacBeath (1999) and MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) proclaimed the acknowledgement of high-performance leadership from the stance of school inspection is regarded as a significant indicator for school quality since the inspection tool are seen as a powerful influence towards self-directed school improvement.

The current study additionally revealed that the practice of school inspection cannot be separated with the occurrences of negative effects. This corroborated with a past study by Ehren and Vissher (2006) who found that school inspection may lead to the unintended negative effects. This is true in a sense that it may lead to stress and additional workload as well as the adverse impact of 'window dressing'. Hargreaves (1995) revealed that teachers tend to structure their lessons with greater detail prior to classroom observation. This is destructive as school inspectors need to see whether the school successfully meets its target in terms of teaching and learning outcomes. As put forth by Black and William (2001), classroom is the 'black box' where school inspectors need to see it in the actual setting to determine the quality of input and out of education.

On a diverse standpoint, the qualitative findings raised the issue of concerns with regards to the unfavourable side effects brought in by the utilization of the Standard 1 as the tool of monitoring to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in the domain of school leadership. In this vein, the present study has captured school and instructional leaders' disapproval on the stringent requirement of the Standard 1 which has more often than not caused disruptions to the school routine. Moreover, the adverse effect of judging the school to be responsible of every detected inadequacy were also put forth by leaders. Past literature has shown that school inspection recommendations have implications that may result in them being rejected by schools for many reasons. These may include that they work in theory rather in practice; not linear with school contexts; require extra resources; consume time and money; generic; and repetitive from school to school (Ehren & Visscher, 2006 citing Gray in Visscher, 2002, p. 62). The findings of the current study seem to support many studies conducted in numerous settings which revealed the negative sides of school inspection on schools. Cullingford and Daniels (1999) and Rosenthal (2004) argued that student performance results, declines in an inspection year which is believed due to the enormous disruptions and pressure of preparing for the upcoming school inspection.

In relation to the negative effect, De Wolf and Janssens (2007) declared that there are four unintended reactions which may occur due to school inspection, namely: Window dressing, Unintended strategic behaviour, Occurrences of stress and Market forces in education. De Wolf and Janssens (2007) concluded these negative effects were assignable to the fact that "at the moment the findings are ambiguous and the research methodology varies substantially and is not always appropriate ..." (p. 392). Henceforth, this would lead to some implications and recommendations particularly in the training of school and instructional leaders on the inspection tool as well as in the reshaping and upgrading of the current practice of school inspection.

CONCLUSION

Scholars studying the discipline of leadership cautioned on the renewed and demanding urgency for school and instructional leaders to reconstruct their knowledge and competencies to understand the changes in the delivery of education caused by globalization and knowledge-driven industry as well as the vast expansion of technology (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Botha, 2013; Rahimah & Ghavifekr, 2014). In linking school inspection to leadership performance, Botha (2013) stressed that a major shift in educational leadership is greatly required to allow for the reconstruction of thinking and practices which is evident in the application of inspection instrument in the conduct of SSE in schools. In this domain, Brown (2001) resourced to the study of Weber (1971) professed that school improvement is largely determined by high performance leadership which is dominantly distinguished by the leader's accomplishment in setting up the right tone of the school.

The current study had successfully put forward urgent and notable findings in respect of the current practice of school inspection in the Malaysian schools. The study established school and instructional leaders' gratification on the current conduct of school inspection in Malaysia with regards to aspects such as communication and feedback as well as compliance with the principles of inspection. Also, the current study captured on school and instructional leaders' grasps on the advantages and indispensability of the inspection instrument (SKPMg2) to transform their schools towards effective schools. Therefore, one of the crucial implications of this study was that it had brought out the visible pathway and framework of the Malaysian School of Inspectorate which could be capitalized to further improve the current practices as well as for the concerned stakeholders to understand the comprehensiveness and intactness of school

inspection in Malaysia. Consequently, the findings above correlated with many scholars in constituting the fundamental paradigm shift in school inspection (Van Bruggen, 2010) which triggered as the leverages pressure on leaders to improve its quality of education (Dedering & Muller, 2011).

The findings of this current study give credence to the aspect of policy implication in the Malaysian education system. First and foremost, the study was conducted with extensive reviews of the present and previous policy implementations in education. The overview of school inspection has reflected vast changes and improvement in terms of practice and inspection instruments to suit and support the evolution of educational policies aimed to give rise to students' attainment and human capital. In this study, it was discovered that school and instructional leaders' top notch expertise, capability and knowledge on the use of inspection instrument not only to self-evaluate their respective schools, but to capitalize it as guidance to operate the school and improve professional practices. Obviously, inspection conducted by trained school inspectors is hold to be appropriately administered and in one way or another has assisted school leaders to better grasp the concept of school operation using SKPMg2 as guidance and blueprint. In ensuring the success of the implementation of SSE using the SKPMg2, up to the present time the Malaysian School Inspectorate is still conducting a nationwide coaching to schools and other related stakeholders to promote and inculcate the accurate use of the inspection instrument in the direction of upgrading leadership performance towards school improvement. As declared by Blok et al. (2011), intensive exposure and guidance are critical determinant for SSE to be enforced efficiently. McNamara et al. (2011) reasoned further on the prominence of exposure and guidance in stating that school leaders and teachers are qualified educators but not some expert researchers which will enable them to conduct SSE without much difficulty. To all intents and purposes, the recent development has witnessed that the Malaysian School of Inspectorate has taken a step forward to revise and adapt the instrument of inspection and has been rebranded as SKPMg2 to best suit based on the current education policy and needs.

Findings derived from this study manifested a pivotal conception that further development of a specific module of leadership enhancement can pertinently make reference to a renowned adoption model originated from Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003). This theory gave prominence to the innovation-decision process on how an individual is motivated to adopt to an innovation involving five steps consisting of Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation and Confirmation. With this intention, Rogers (2003) further described the adopter categories as the "classification of members of a social system on the basis of innovativeness". Notably, this classification comprised of Innovators (2.5%), Early Adopters (13.5%), Early Majority (34%), Late Majority (34%) and Laggards (16%). Rogers maintained that the reason behind the categorisation of adopters based on innovativeness because it helped in understanding the individual desire and behaviour during the innovation-decision process. Based on the findings outcome generated from the current study, trainings for novice and future school leaders can be structured based on the best predictor that help governs high leadership performance. With this in mind, the National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership as the main educational management institute in Malaysia should develop curriculum on leadership training which will elevate school leaders' Knowledge on the practice of inspection and utilization of the inspection instrument to guide towards school's improvement. This is in line with the aim of MOE and IAB in the aspiration to produce educational leaders of high calibre to achieve the aspiration stipulated in Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025)

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