



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN TS25 SCHOOLS IN
NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA***

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN TS25 SCHOOLS IN
NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA**

By

NURUL JAWAHIR BINTI MD ALI

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Philosophy**

September 2021

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DEDICATION

All praise to Allah s.w.t., the Most Compassionate and Most Merciful; without whom, the effort, work and endeavour in this journey would not be occurred. There is no power nor strength except with Allah.

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my parents, Hamidah Kasim and Md Ali Jamil, and my sister, Nurul Sakinah for their unwavering love, patience, understanding, advice, encouragement and prayers throughout. You are the wind beneath my wings.

To my family, relatives, mentor, naqibah, mas'ulah, friends and all people that shared their advice and encouragement to finish this study and those that touched my *qalb* (heart), *ruh* (spirit), *nafs* (self) and *'aql* (intellect).

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all students and learners. Keep learning.

"Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will facilitate for him a path to Jannah (Paradise)" [Sahih Muslim and Sunan Tirmizi]

"If you can't stand the fatigue of study, you will feel the poignant of stupidity"
[Imam Shafi'i]

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN TS25 SCHOOLS IN NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA

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September 2021

Chairman : Assoc. Prof. Suhaida Abdul Kadir, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

School inspection is an important instrument in educational administration to maintain the quality of education. Despite its positive intend, numbers of undesirable effects of school inspection have been reported. The occurrence of negative effects has raised concern as it can undo the intended effects of inspection. There's an increasing trend in studying the effects of school inspection. However, little is known about how school inspection is experienced by the inspectees and how its impact on school improvement can be accomplished. With numerous studies on school inspection in Europe and inadequate understanding on its experience that can describe the underlying reasons for the unintended effects, a study that focuses on this matter beyond the European context needs to be conducted. Therefore, two research questions were developed to seek and explore on how school inspection is experienced and perceived by teachers and school administrators and how does school inspection facilitate schools to improve their practices in teaching and school management.

Frameworks of School Inspection Effect (Ehren & Visscher, 2006; de Wolf & Janssens, 2007) and Model of Effects and Effectiveness of School Inspection (Landwehr, 2011) were applied in developing the theoretical framework. By using qualitative case study approach, two schools in Negeri Sembilan that were inspected under 'Inspection on Implementation of Transformation School Program 2025' were studied. Data was collected through 9 semi structured interviews followed with document analysis and were thematically analysed.

The findings have captured detailed account about the process before and during inspection along with the favourable and unfavourable response to school inspection, and the positive perception on school inspectors. Despite initial emotional disturbances and perceived burden, participants accepted the given feedback and have positive perception on the purpose of school inspection as a process to monitor and ensure schools' quality and standard enforcement, which helps toward school improvement. This study has revealed that school inspectors' positive attitude along with the school personnel role in accepting the feedback has contribute to positive outcomes, in which schools are able to make improvement in both areas of teaching and school management.

It is concluded that the pre-inspection process like the time selection and duration of preparation as well as the inspectors' attitude are important in ensuring the effectiveness of school inspection. However, school personnel also play key role in accepting the given feedback and turning it into meaningful action for the sake of school improvement. Although the inspection was deemed as burdensome, it is still regarded as beneficial by the participants and school improvement is successfully achieved.

It is recommended for school inspector to possess positive traits as mentioned in the findings to promote positive and beneficial process of school inspection. With the given highlight on the positive process of school inspection that can help school towards improvement, School Inspectorate would be able to reflect its approach and practice in conducting school inspection. Finally, school administrator has important role too in promoting positive acceptance of school inspection finding among school members. This study also offers a conceptual framework that contribute toward the body of knowledge in the field of educational administration and outlining suggestions for improving the practice of administering school via inspection.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PELAKSANAAN PENAZIRAN SEKOLAH DI SEKOLAH TS25 DI NEGERI
SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Penaziran sekolah merupakan instrumen penting dalam pentadbiran pendidikan bagi menjamin kualiti pendidikan yang ditawarkan. Sungguhpun tujuannya adalah positif, kesan-kesan negatif penaziran sekolah telah banyak dilaporkan dalam kajian lepas. Hal ini telah menimbulkan kebimbangan kerana kesan-kesan ini didapati berupaya untuk mengatasi impak positif yang diinginkan. Terdapat peningkatan trend dalam pelaksanaan kajian berkaitan kesan penaziran sekolah. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak banyak yang diketahui tentang bagaimana proses penaziran dialami oleh pihak sekolah dan bagaimana impaknya terhadap penambahbaikan sekolah boleh dicapai. Oleh kerana kebanyakan literatur hanya tertumpu di Eropah dan kurangnya kefahaman tentang aspek pengalaman penaziran yang boleh memperjelaskan kesan negatif yang timbul, kajian yang memfokuskan kepada aspek ini dalam konteks di luar Eropah perlu dilaksanakan. Oleh itu, dua persoalan kajian telah dibentuk bagi meneroka bagaimanakah penaziran sekolah dialami dan ditanggapi oleh guru dan pentadbir sekolah serta bagaimanakah proses ini membantu sekolah dalam menambah baik amalan pengajaran dan pengurusan sekolah tersebut.

Kerangka Kesan Penaziran Sekolah (Ehren & Visscher, 2006; de Wolf & Janssens, 2007) serta Model Kesan dan Keberkesanan Penaziran Sekolah (Landwehr, 2011) telah digunakan bagi membentuk kerangka teoretikal. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes kualitatif, dua buah sekolah di Negeri Sembilan yang mengalami 'Pemeriksaan Pelaksanaan Program Transformasi Sekolah 2025' telah dikaji. Data telah diambil berdasarkan 9 temu bual separa berstruktur disusuli dengan analisis dokumen dan dianalisis secara tematik.

Dapatan kajian telah menghuraikan secara terperinci tentang proses sebelum dan semasa penaziran termasuklah respons yang baik dan kurang baik terhadap penaziran serta persepsi positif terhadap nazir. Walaupun penaziran telah mendatangkan kesan emosi serta dianggap sebagai membebankan, peserta kajian telah menerima maklum balas yang diberikan dan memberikan tanggapan yang positif terhadap peranan penaziran sekolah sebagai suatu proses untuk memantau dan memastikan kualiti sekolah serta penguatkuasaan standard yang menyumbang terhadap penambahbaikan sekolah. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa sikap nazir sekolah yang positif serta penerimaan warga sekolah terhadap maklum balas yang diberikan telah membawa hasil yang positif, yang membolehkan aspek pengajaran dan pengurusan sekolah berjaya ditambah baik.

Rumusannya, proses pra-penaziran seperti penetapan tarikh dan tempoh persediaan serta sikap nazir memainkan peranan penting bagi memastikan keberkesanan penaziran sekolah. Walaupun demikian, warga sekolah turut memainkan peranan penting dalam menerima dan menterjemahkan maklum balas nazir kepada tindakan yang bermakna untuk penambahbaikan sekolah. Meskipun penaziran dianggap sebagai membebankan, ia tetap diterima sebagai sesuatu yang bermanfaat buat sekolah dan penambahbaikan turut berjaya dicapai.

Kajian ini mencadangkan agar nazir sekolah mempunyai kualiti positif seperti yang didapati dalam kajian ini bagi menggalakkan proses penaziran yang positif dan bermanfaat. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian yang menekankan tentang kepentingan proses penaziran yang positif dalam menyumbang ke arah penambahbaikan sekolah, Jemaah Nazir boleh membuat penilaian terhadap pendekatan dan amalan mereka dalam melaksanakan penaziran. Akhirnya, pentadbir sekolah turut berperanan dalam menggalakkan penerimaan positif warga sekolah terhadap dapatan penaziran. Kajian ini turut membentangkan kerangka konseptual yang menyumbang kepada penerokaan pengetahuan dalam bidang pentadbiran pendidikan serta menggariskan cadangan bagi menambah baik aspek pentadbiran pendidikan melalui amalan penaziran.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BS	Bukit Secondary School
BTP	<i>Bahagian Teknologi Pendidikan</i> (Educational Technology Division)
CAQDAS	Computer aided qualitative data analysis software
JNNS	Continuous Professional Development
DEO	District Education Office
ESR	External School Review
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
JN	<i>Jemaah Nazir</i> (School Inspectorate)
CPD	<i>Jemaah Nazir Negeri Sembilan</i> (School Inspectorate of Negeri Sembilan)
JNS	<i>Jemaah Nazir Sekolah</i> (School Inspectorate)
LADAP	<i>Latihan Dalam Perkhidmatan</i> (In-House Training)
MGB	<i>Majlis Guru Besar</i> (Headmaster Council)
MCO	Movement Control Order
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAK21	<i>Pembelajaran Abad ke-21</i> (21st-Century Learning)
PCG	Per capita grant
PdP	<i>Pengajaran dan pembelajaran</i> (Teaching and learning)
PdPc	<i>Pengajaran dan pemudahcaraan</i> (Teaching and facilitation)
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PT3	<i>Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3</i> (Form 3 Assessment)

PTA	Parents Teacher Association
SED	State Education Department
SEM	School Excellence Model
SISC	School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus
SJK(T)	<i>Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil</i> (Tamil National-Type Primary School)
SKM	<i>Sekolah Kurang Murid</i> (Low Enrolment Schools)
SKPM	<i>Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Education Quality Standard)
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SSE	School self-evaluation
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TPS	Tanjung Primary School
TQM	Total Quality Management
TS	Transformation School
TS25	<i>Transformasi Sekolah 2025</i> (School Transformation 2025)
UKM	<i>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</i> (National University of Malaysia)
UPSI	<i>Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris</i> (Sultan Idris Education University)
UPSR	<i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Achievement Test)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the introduction and problem of the study. The chapter also covers the research purpose, research questions, significance of the study and definition of terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

School inspection has been employed in the educational setting for at least three centuries. The origin and history of the education inspection system can be traced to the Napoleonic era at the end of the 18th century in France (De Grauwe, 2007). As the French invasions under Napoleon continued and extended to other European regions in the 1800s, a consciousness of nation-building emerged that led to the establishment of a mass education system. To control the education system throughout its colonies, France introduced a public inspection service (Cohen et al., 2006; De Grauwe, 2007). This system was then adopted by other European countries in the 19th century (Ehren, 2016). In the Netherlands, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education has been established since 1801 (Ehren & Honingh, 2011) while Britain's school inspection service, known as Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), was officially introduced in 1839. Thus, school inspection can be regarded as the oldest practice of controlling and monitoring a national education system (Wilcox, 2000). As quality control and supervision in education exist nearly everywhere, school inspection serves an important role in the educational setting.

School inspection can be described as the process of evaluating, assessing and supervising the school quality, performance and service. This is undertaken by an external party that has been given a mandate to do so by a national authority, usually known as the school inspectorate. The process involves visits by an inspector or a group of inspectors to a school to observe the institution (Wilcox, 2000), collect information about the quality of the school, check the legislation compliance (Eddy-Spicer et al., 2016) and even advise, assist and support the teachers and/or headteachers (De Grauwe, 2007). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the purpose of school inspection is to ensure that schools are accountable for their actions while simultaneously contributing to school improvement (OECD, 2013b). It is believed that through such actions, school inspection will maintain the quality of education while improving the school's delivery of high-quality education and provision of a high-quality teaching and

learning environment. Due to these roles, school inspectorate bodies have been regarded as the guardians of educational standards (MacBeath, 2006).

1.2.1 School Inspection in Malaysia

School inspection is important in ensuring the quality of education and controlling the educational system by ensuring that schools maintain compliance with the educational standards (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). In Malaysia, the entity that has been authorised to undertake inspections is the School Inspectorate, or *Jemaah Nazir* (JN). The JN is an educational department under the Director-General of Education, Ministry of Education (MOE). School inspection is generally conducted by school inspectors, JN employees who are authorised to inspect and examine schools. Inspections involve visits by inspectors, either individually or in a group, who observe educational institutions, services and other issues of concern. Inspections are performed while a school is functioning in its actual setting and during real school hours.

Historically, as a professional body, the JN was established as the Federal School Inspectorate, or *Jemaah Nazir Persekutuan*, in October 1956, in alignment with the Razak Report 1956 (Hamid Idris, 2013). The body was subsequently confirmed under the Education Ordinance 1957. The establishment of a regulatory body for education, which had been recommended since 1938, was undertaken by a special commission with reference to the Education Policy of 1952. Its establishment was supported in the 1956 Education Committee Report (the Razak Report) and was intended to form a special nationwide educational assurance system. When it began in 1956, the JN was a closed-system organisation known as the Federal School Inspectorate, or *Jemaah Nazir Persekutuan*. The entity later became known as the *Jemaah Nazir Sekolah* (JNS) or School Inspectorate in 1996. In 2008, when the Ministry of Education (MOE) was restructured, the name JNS was changed to the School Inspectorate (JN) to reflect the body's main function as the guardian of educational quality.

Jemaah Nazir (JN) plays an important role in ensuring that the standard and quality of education in Malaysia are maintained at the targeted level. This role must be practised and implemented optimally to ensure that the aspirations for the country's education system - which the MOE strives to achieve - remain on course, especially at the school level. Subsection 117 (a) of the Education Act 1996 outlines the duty of the Chief Inspector of Schools to ensure that satisfactory teaching standards are established and maintained at educational institutions (*Jemaah Nazir*, 2010).

To allow it to safeguard the quality of education in Malaysia, as well as to practise its role and function, the JN was given certain powers and authority in the Education Act 1996, specifically in 'Part X - The Inspectorate of Schools'. Among its main duties, the JN is to conduct examinations of educational institutions, as outlined in Subsection 117. The JN needs to examine or inspect any educational institution at an appropriate time when ordered to do so by the Education Minister and it must perform any other obligations related to the examination of educational institutions. Subsection 118 provides the JN with advisory powers to give advice to school governors or any other person responsible for the management of an educational institution. The JN also serves to advise teachers about teaching and pedagogical methods. Furthermore, the JN is also responsible for providing reports to the Education Minister. Under Subsection 120, the Chief Inspector of the JN shall submit a report to the Minister on the educational institution it examines and, based on the report made by the School Inspector, he shall recommend any review deemed appropriate.

1.3 School Inspection Issues

School inspection is an external evaluation of schools and it has become a tool for educational governance (Dietrich et al., 2015). It is conducted to examine a school's quality, compliance with the educational standards and regulations (Eddy-Spicer et al., 2016) as well as its programs and performance. The intention is to improve the effectiveness, equity and quality of education (Kemethofer et al., 2017). Based on these purposes, it was assumed that school inspection may contribute positively to the quality of education (Ehren & Visscher, 2006). Therefore, school inspection is intended to be an instrument that helps a school to improve. However, this premise has been challenged by findings that indicate otherwise.

A growing number of studies have suggested that school inspection has caused undesirable effects, including emotional side effects like stress and anxiety among teachers (Brimblecombe et al., 1996; Ehren et al., 2016; Penninckx et al., 2015b, 2015c; Quintelier et al., 2020b; Steinberg, 2008; Wagner, 2020), as well as fear (Case et al., 2010; Haris et al., 2018; Perryman, 2007; Segerholm & Hult, 2016). However, a more serious undesirable side effect of school inspection involves the practice of intended strategic behaviour, an unethical intentional response taken by principals and teachers to improve a school's inspection results (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren et al., 2016; Fitz-Gibbon, 1997). These activities include cheating, fraud and the fabrication of school data. It is feared that such undesirable consequences can overshadow the positive and intended effects of school inspection (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Jones & Tymms, 2014). Fears of and concerns about the consequences of a negative inspection result have caused these forms of behaviour.

England, whose school inspection system is regarded as 'high-stakes', has placed its schools under intense scrutiny through the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the national entity that performs school inspection (Colman, 2020; Ehren et al., 2016). Penninckx et al. (2016) argued that most studies regarding the effects of school inspection had been conducted in England and were thus marked as having taken place in a 'high-stakes' inspection setting, in which instances of undesirable side effects are highly likely to be reported. School inspection systems are regarded as 'high-stakes' when schools might experience harmful or threatening consequences following negative judgements from inspectors. These consequences include the removal of school principals (Skerritt, 2018), sanctions for low-performing schools (Ehren et al., 2016; Skerritt, 2018), potential job losses for teachers (Clapham, 2015; Penninckx et al., 2015b), the stigmatisation of the school through the publication of the inspection findings (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Greatbatch & Tate, 2019) and, in the worst case, the closure of the school (Penninckx et al., 2015b; Skerritt, 2018). In contrast, school inspection systems that do not implement such penalties are considered 'low-stakes'.

Numerous studies have been conducted to understand the effects and side effects of school inspection. Despite the increasing number of such studies, discussions and evidence of the effectiveness of school inspection on schools remain scarce (Hofer et al., 2020) and inconclusive, which demonstrates the inconsistency of the existing findings (Behnke & Steins, 2017; Hopkins et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Kemethofer et al., 2017; Penninckx et al., 2015b). Some studies have revealed unfavourable effects of school inspection, as presented above, while some have discovered the contribution and benefits of school inspection, such as subsequent school improvements (Gustafsson et al., 2015; Janssens & van Amelsvoort, 2008; Kemethofer et al., 2017). Other authors, like de Wolf and Janssens (2007) and Ehren et al. (2016) have revealed both types of effects.

The theoretical literature explaining the effects of school inspection is mainly derived and conceptualised from European contexts where high-stakes settings may exist, like England and the Netherlands (Gustafsson et al., 2015). Therefore, various undesirable effects of school inspection are included in their frameworks. It has been suggested that instances of the undesirable effects of school inspection are far more likely to occur in high-stakes evaluation systems, while those operating in a low-stakes system were found to be highly likely to accept inspection feedback (Altrichter & Kemethofer, 2015; Ehren et al., 2015; Quintelier et al., 2020b). This assumption, however, was challenged by the school inspection effects findings from research conducted in Flemish schools (considered a low-stakes inspection context), which revealed otherwise (Penninckx et al., 2015b). Schools have been reported to be heavily involved in strategic activities, aiming to obtain a better result and image. In addition, school members who were involved with an inspection have been reported to suffer from serious emotional consequences as a result of the inspection. Due to the sparse findings concerning the school inspection effects and the strong

evidence indicating the occurrence of unintended effects, it is not yet clear how the school improvement function of a school inspection can be achieved (Hofer et al., 2020). Therefore, the effect of school inspection remains inconclusive in terms of whether school inspection has positive or negative impacts on a school. Thus, it has been suggested that more research on and evidence for the effects and side effects of inspections are required in diverse educational contexts (Behnke & Steins, 2017; Hopkins et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Penninckx et al., 2015a).

School inspection is considered a potentially powerful instrument since the political and administrative authorities conduct quality control and maintain the capacity of the education system to ensure and improve the delivery of educational services (Lyons & Pritchard, 1976). As inspection is deemed essential in educational administration, any flaws and weaknesses in its delivery are cause for concern as these might hinder the effectiveness of educational governance and hamper the ideal and targeted vision. Therefore, the school inspection topic warrants further study as it is associated with educational quality and improvement.

1.4 Problem Statement

Research on the effects of school inspection has been expanding in recent years. The existing literature provides multiple findings related to school inspection effects, both desirable and undesirable. While inspection was originally intended to maintain educational quality, new findings have challenged the capability of school inspection to make positive contributions to schools. Instead, it has been argued that school inspection has, to a great extent, brought negative consequences that might outweigh and overshadow any positive outcomes (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Jones & Tymms, 2014). In their systematic review, Penninckx and Vanhoof (2015) concluded that school inspections had failed to offer new insights to schools into their own strengths and weaknesses after an inspection. Moreover, school inspections have caused severe negative emotional effects among school personnel. This review indicates the importance of studying the underlying explanatory features that cause such effects.

Little is known about how a school inspection is experienced by teachers and administrators and what causes the aforementioned effects (Penninckx & Vanhoof, 2015). Instead of focusing on only the effects of school inspection, the voices of the school personnel should be included to gain their understanding of how a school inspection is conducted and how this impacts the school. Exploring the inspectees' experience would enable the school inspection process and activities to be examined, while the underlying attributes of its practice that affect the attainment of school improvement and the potential side effects can be further revealed.

Besides the insufficient information about the underlying experiences involved in school inspection, most studies on the impacts of such inspections have been conducted in European countries; the highest number of such studies have been undertaken in England (Gustafsson et al., 2015; Penninckx et al., 2015b). School inspection in England occurs in a high-stakes setting, whereby the implications of negative inspection judgements can be severe. Low-stakes systems, however, are characterised by the schools, principals and teachers suffering few or no personal consequences (Quintelier et al., 2020a). However, other low-stakes contexts have witnessed strong strategic behaviour and severe emotional side effects linked to school inspection, as discovered in Flanders (Penninckx et al., 2014).

Conducting this study in the Malaysian context would bridge various gaps by providing evidence of a low-stakes inspection setting that has not been fully revealed, as well as exploring how school inspection is experienced and how that experience can impact schools through the occurrence of negative side effects and/or the desirable effects that contribute to school improvement. Although no researcher has specifically mentioned that school inspection in Malaysia is low-stakes, the comparative descriptions of high-stakes and low-stakes systems in the existing literature - as presented in the previous section (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Clapham, 2015; Penninckx et al., 2015b; Ehren et al., 2016; Skerritt, 2018) - indicate that school inspection in Malaysia can be deemed low-stakes since no severe sanctions are involved, the literature suggests. For example, it is highly unlikely and almost impossible for schools in Malaysia to be closed simply due to underperformance and poor school inspection results. Due to the cultural differences and low-stakes setting of this context, exploring this topic in Malaysia may reveal novel and additional findings that might further describe the experiences and aspects that result from a school inspection, as well as new practices that can help schools to improve.

Despite its low-stakes setting, Malaysia's school inspections are not averse to delivering criticism. Tahir et al. (2018) discovered that dealing with school inspectors has become a key factor that contributes to stress among deputy heads in primary schools. This finding signalled that the pressure stemmed from the process and the interaction between the deputy heads and the inspectors. This work produced similar findings to those from Europe, reporting that the side effects of school inspection could be associated with stress among school members. Insufficient descriptions are available about the potential contributions of the auditing and accountability processes to school improvement. Instead of only studying the effects, the current study aimed to focus on the experience of school inspection, which might reveal in detail the occurrences that potentially contribute to such effects and whether school improvements can be achieved in these circumstances. Several questions about school inspection in Malaysia had remained unaddressed, in terms of how the inspections performed by inspectors might create certain perceptions among school members, as well as whether school improvements could occur despite school members' unfavourable perceptions of school inspection.

Furthermore, the theoretical literature describing the effectiveness of school inspection, like the frameworks designed by Ehren and Visscher (2006), de Wolf and Janssens (2007) and Landwehr (2011), is derived from European studies. Research into the experiences and effects of school inspection in Malaysia is underdeveloped, while European frameworks for studying the effects of school inspection have not been employed in many countries with a low-stakes system. The use of an international or foreign framework can provide additional evidence, contextualising it to the local setting (Zheng, 2020). Extending a particular theory derived from a different region to a new research context can create opportunities for new discoveries, potentially adding new dimensions or expanding the existing dimensions of the theory. As the selected theories have been derived from different settings, employing them outside Europe may determine how universal they are. The existing framework content includes several undesirable effects of school inspection, such as fraud, teaching to inspection, and the misrepresentation and stigmatisation of a school through the publication of its inspection results. These undesirable effects are usually associated with high-stakes school inspection settings, like those of England. Therefore, conducting a study in a low-stakes setting may reveal whether the effects are transferable to low-stakes contexts.

Based on these issues and the knowledge gap, research should now begin to shift towards studying the school inspection experiences of the inspectees. Studies of the experiences and underlying features of school inspection should be conducted to give voices to the members of a school because their encounters with the inspection can provide useful details that enable the consequences of school inspections to be better understood. In giving school members the opportunity to share their stories and experiences, a qualitative study is the most suitable approach to employ as it may provide an in-depth understanding of their experiences.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Based on the issues regarding the negative perceptions of school inspection and the potential threat of its negative effects, this thesis aims to uncover the perspectives of inspectees on the exercise of school inspection and their experiences of the process. After obtaining inspectees' perspectives, analysis and description of their experiences may reveal explanations for any variations in school members' perceptions of school inspection.

School inspection is a form of school supervision and an educational administration quality control mechanism. If ineffective, its purpose may be hindered, which is to maintain high-quality education and school improvement. As the school improvement function of a school inspection and the way improvements can be attained are far from clear (Hofer et al., 2020), one major contribution of this thesis is to explore, describe and present the way schools

can benefit from the school inspection process and determine whether they can improve after the inspection.

To understand and clarify the mixed perceptions of teachers towards inspectors as well as the unclear results and benefits of a school inspection, the general purpose of this study is to explore how teachers and administrators experience school inspection and determine the contribution that school inspection makes to teaching and school management improvements. As the inspectees, teachers and administrators are usually the individuals involved with the school inspection process, they also interact most frequently with school inspectors during an inspection. The perspectives of, and the findings derived from, these participants may allow a thorough depiction of the school inspection process and experiences, potentially contributing rich and in-depth discoveries that answer the research questions.

1.6 Research Questions

The study addresses two research questions:

- i. How is school inspection experienced and perceived by teachers and school administrators?
- ii. How does school inspection facilitate improvements to schools' teaching and management practices?

1.7 Significance of Study

The evidence available on the effects of the school inspection process is inconsistent, having shown mixed findings that present both the positive effects that inspection has on school improvements as well the numerous studies illustrating how school inspections produce negative and undesirable effects. It is important to study the experience and process of the school inspection that may explain its overall effects, especially the negative ones. Thus, exploring the school inspection process based on the participants' experiences and their perceptions of its effects is an important research theme, as this would provide a better picture and understanding of the actual events that have occurred in this context.

Various events may underlie a school inspection process, which explains why certain views are held. The question remains whether Malaysian teachers hold the same views and preconceptions. In Malaysia, not all teachers have experienced a school inspector's visit since some schools have not been

inspected. This was stated by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013) in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (p. 6-9) as follows:

The JN currently conducts 2,500 inspections per year. These range from fully comprehensive inspections to targeted inspections that are made in response to complaints from parents. However, these inspections only cover a small percentage of Malaysia's schools each year, with over one-third of schools not having been inspected since 2005.

Not all teachers have this experience and the general perception of an inspection may be passed on from teachers who have experienced one to others who haven't. Thus, during their professional life, teachers may retain assumptions and impressions of the school inspection based on the stories and tales told by their colleagues. Knowledge and perceptions of the inspection process are often based on the stories passed on from senior teachers to other teachers. However, they may not all be true. Negative perceptions might have arisen from subjective experiences, either personal or indirect. A dearth of research exists in relation to the school inspection experience in the context of Malaysia, so more effective explanations are needed for the effects and perceptions of a school inspection, for example, the experience of stress among Malaysian school deputy heads caused by school inspection (Tahir et al., 2018).

With little empirical or research-based literature available on this topic, the current study will shed light on the school inspection process as it is perceived by teachers and school administrators through their experience. Thus, this research aims to study the topic of school inspection in depth by engaging the key actors: inspectees such as teachers and school administrators. Obtaining the perspectives of these participants will provide a different avenue through which this topic may be further understood. As this topic has not been explored or described in local research and since most literature on the topic is derived from European contexts, this study is expected to expand the understanding of school inspection experiences and effects from an additional context, thus contributing to the overall body of knowledge. In doing so, this study offers a conceptual framework in the conclusion that outlines its theoretical contributions.

The study findings might benefit the Ministry of Education by identifying the existing strengths and weaknesses of the current practice of school inspection, as well as enabling a better understanding of the gap between what is given during an inspection and what is received from the inspectees' viewpoints. The ways that inspectees could utilise their experience and the ways a school benefits (or not) might also be recognised.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013) claimed it would review the current inspection process to determine how the existing review model could be streamlined in order to ensure that every school was inspected at least once every three years. Through this study, the school members' perspectives can be taken into account to ascertain what benefit and impact school inspection has on school improvement. de Wolf and Janssens (2007, p. 380) said that "research into the (side) effects of control mechanisms in education is (also) relevant from a policy perspective". In discussing this context, they also raised the pertinent questions of whether this public control and quality assurance mechanism functions effectively, as well as the possible advantages and disadvantages of this mechanism. Thus, the findings of such a study may help to provide knowledge about the current school inspection practice and the extent to which it contributes significantly to school quality and improvement.

In addition, the current study also offers a conceptual framework in the conclusion of the thesis. This framework was developed by abstracting the research findings and comparing them with the theoretical framework. The suggested framework describes school inspection elements that can drive school improvement while limiting the unwanted effects of inspection. This framework should provide additional insights into the topic, thus offering theoretical contributions to this field.

1.8 Limitations and Scope of the Study

This study intends to understand and explore the perspectives and experiences of school inspections through the eyes of the participants – the teachers and school administrators – by obtaining their views on how they reacted and were affected after experiencing a school inspection. To understand and acquire their emic perspectives, the target research sample (containing teachers and school administrators) was to be obtained from schools that had been subjected to a thematic inspection, known more specifically as the 'Inspection of Transformation School Program 2025 Implementation'. Based on communication with a school inspector in the early phase of this study, the examination and inspection process conducted by the JN in Malaysia is limited by financial concerns. Therefore, choosing and determining an ideal school inspection event was extremely difficult due to the obstacles involved in securing permission to observe the process. The best option for the researcher was to interview schools examined in 2018 and 2019, the most recent inspection identified. These inspections included instructional and managerial inspection, as outlined in the national Transformation School 2025 policy, better known as TS25. Therefore, this study was limited to this type of inspection and the scope of teaching and management that was inspected.

Based on preliminary contact with the Head of the School Inspectorate to seek permission for the data collection entry, the researcher faced a challenge: the school inspector was not allowed to be interviewed. This forced the

cancellation of the original intention, to interview the inspector and obtain multiple perspectives on the phenomenon by including the inspector and the inspectees (the teachers and school administrators). Thus, the research findings were limited to being based only on the data on perspectives obtained from teachers and school administrators. The researcher sought permission to observe the school inspection process, but this was also refused. Hence, only the in-depth interview method and document analysis was employed for data collection.

By employing a multiple case study approach, using purposive sampling and setting specific criteria for the research participants, the research sampling for this study was limited to a finite and fixed number of participants. Nine research participants were involved in this study, four from a primary school and five from a secondary school. A fixed number of samples is a natural limitation of the case study approach. This limitation has been identified in previous school inspection studies that employed the same research design, such as that of James (2016). Given the limited sample based on the criteria chosen, the findings are highly contextualised to the case under investigation. Other findings and suggestions may have arisen from different cases and contexts.

Several models have been used to describe this topic. These function as the underlying structure and scaffolding for the frame of the study. These models are derived from Western and European contexts and evidence. Therefore, they serve to support the study without limiting the area from which the findings were obtained. Any contrasting evidence that emerged through this study and differed from the models was still appreciated as qualitative research is not intended to test a theory. In addition, these study findings cannot be generalised to other contexts. Nor can they be quantified because the data was analysed and explained thematically.

1.9 Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Effect of School Inspection

An effect is defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as an intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention (OECD, 2013a). In the context of this study, an effect refers to any intended or unintended outcome, whether positive or negative, of a school inspection on a school. An effect is often discussed in association with a 'school reaction' in any appropriate context to relate the teachers' and administrators' responses to any subsequent effects or side effects of a school inspection.

1.9.2 School inspection

Eddy-Spicer, Ehren, Bangpan, Khatwa and Perrone (2016, p. 16) defined school inspection as the external assessments of schools, performed by external officers who were given a mandate by a national or local authority. Inspection involves regular visits to schools to enable the officials to gather information about a school's quality, to check legislation compliance and/or evaluate the quality of the students' work through various means including observations, interviews and document analysis. In the context of this study, a school inspection refers to an event whereby school inspectors actually visited a school and examined the school and its classrooms with the purpose of examining the school's practice and implementation of the leadership role involved in implementing the School Transformation Program 2025 (TS25), the quality of teaching and learning, the school's intervention plans to address issues, as well as parental and community involvement in promoting student development. School inspections in this context occur twice and are conducted by a team of inspector through interviews with school staff like teachers and administrators; classroom and school observation; and document reviews. A feedback session follows.

1.9.3 School Administrators

The term 'school administrator' usually refers to an individual whose job scope covers the principalship and superintendency of a school or educational institution (Gates et al., 2003), such as a principal or headteacher. In the context of this study, the term refers to those in the senior leadership team (SLT), like headteachers (primary school), principals (secondary school) and their subordinates (which includes assistant headteachers and assistant principals). The term also covers other administrators (for example, Secretary of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and school counsellors) who are involved in school management in some way, especially aspects of implementing TS25 like the school's intervention plans, as well as managing parental and community networking.

1.10 Summary

This chapter discusses the background and problem of the study, as well as its main purpose and the specific research questions steering the research. The significance of the study was presented to justify its overall importance. The limitations and the scope of the study were addressed, while the terms employed in the study were defined.

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