

**Bridging the Gap: School inspection for school  
improvement, the leadership role**

**سد الفجوة: التفتيش المدرسي لتحسين المدرسة ، الدور القيادي**

**by**

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract in English**

With the increase trend of using school inspection as a tool for measuring school performance, it is only fair to argue that this tool should be effectively used as a mean for school improvement. As the research evidence on the effect of school inspection on school improvement continues to be controversial, and with the negative views associated with the quality of school inspection in UAE, this research aims to explore the role that school leadership plays in ensuring that the results of school inspection are properly used for school improvement. This study sought to examine the effect of reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection and school improvement, explore teacher's views on being an efficient asset in the school improvement plan committee, and investigate the role of school leadership in establishing a compatible and supportive work environment to its teachers. The study was profoundly based on a mixed methodology research in which four different data collection methods (questionnaire, interview, focus group, and data analysis) were deployed. Population of the study included 1 principal, 74 teachers, and 6 head of departments. Findings from this study revealed that reflective feedback on school inspection results does moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement as teachers do appreciate being part of the decision-making process and feel more accountable in the process.

**Keywords: school inspection, school improvement, reflective feedback, transparency, United Arab Emirates**

## Abstract in Arabic

مع الاتجاه المتزايد لاستخدام التفتيش المدرسي كأداة لقياس الأداء المدرسي، من الإنصاف القول بأن هذه الأداة يجب أن تستخدم بفعالية كوسيلة لتحسين المدرسة. بما أن الأدلة البحثية حول تأثير التفتيش المدرسي على تحسين المدارس لا تزال مثيرة للجدل، ومع الآراء السلبية المرتبطة بجودة التفتيش المدرسي في الإمارات يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف كيف يمكن أن تلعب قيادة المدرسة دورًا قويًا في ضمان أن نتائج التفتيش المدرسية تستخدم بشكل صحيح لتحسين مستوى المدرسة. سعت هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة تأثير ردود الفعل الانعكاسية كمعدل بين التفتيش المدرسي وتحسين المدرسة، واستكشاف وجهات نظر المعلم حول كونه رصيدًا فعالًا في لجنة خطة تحسين المدرسة، واستقصاء دور قيادة المدرسة في تهيئة بيئة عمل متوافقة وداعمة لمعلميها. استندت الدراسة بعمق على بحث منهجي مختلط تم فيه نشر أربع طرق مختلفة لجمع البيانات (الاستبيان والمقابلة ومجموعة التركيز وتحليل البيانات). شملت الدراسة مدير واحد و74 مدرسًا و6 مدرسين رئيسيين. تبين من هذه الدراسة أن ردود الفعل العاكسة على نتائج التفتيش المدرسي تؤدي إلى تعديل العلاقة بين التفتيش المدرسي وتحسين المدرسة حيث يقدر المعلمون أنهم جزء من عملية صنع القرار ويشعرون بمزيد من المساءلة في هذه العملية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التفتيش المدرسي، التحسين المدرسي، التقييم الذاتي، الشفافية، الإمارات العربية المتحدة

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this research to my better half, my husband and to all hard-working women and mothers “You Can Do it”

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me throughout my masters' journey starting with my husband, Tarek Saoud, who has demonstrated nothing less than full support and reinforcement throughout my journey. I would like to also dedicate this dissertation to my son Mohamad who inspired me to continue my education. I would also like to thank my parents whom without them I would have never reached to this phase.

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## **Abbreviations**

**ADEK-** Department of Education and Knowledge

**HMI-** Her Majesty's Inspectors

**KHDA-** Knowledge and Human Development Authority

**MOE-** Ministry of Education

**NWREL** -Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

**OECD-** The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OFSTED-** Office for Standards in Education

**PISA-** Programme for International Student Assessment

**UAE-** United Arab Emirates

**USA-** United States of America

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Chapter one of this research generally introduces the two concepts of school inspection and school improvement while specifically focusing on these two concepts in UAE schools. As this research intends to explore the effect of reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection feedback and school improvement, this chapter will provide a roadmap of the research including the purpose of this study, the rationale behind this topic, the research questions, and the significance of this study in the educational quality field.

### **1.1 Background on school inspection**

'All around the world schools are inspected and the assumption is that this in a positive way contributes to the quality of schools and education systems' (Ehren & Visscher 2006, p. 53). To start with, school inspection can be defined as the critical examination and appraisal of educational systems (Olele 1995). The purpose of the inspection is principally to provide support and advice for schools and to guarantee the smooth running of schools' operation. In contrast to the common belief, Okumbe (1999) stated that the inspection process is not targeted at underperforming teachers but aims to identify faultfinding attitude among instructors. This concept of school accountability towards its provided services is not particularly new.

As a matter of fact, school inspection dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when mass public schooling was introduced in countries such as England, Ireland and the Netherlands in which they were required to comply with centrally mandated policies and guidelines (Brown et al. 2016). Paradoxically, school inspection was increasingly introduced in

other countries only because educational quality started to be perceived as the main driver of economic competitiveness and therefore became an important influence in policymaking. However, and more importantly, the increase in comparative evaluation of educational systems, particularly PISA, which was done by international bodies such as the OECD, has led to a flow of interventions and reforms targeting the improvement of student performance outcomes, another reason for the growth of implementation of school inspection (Brown et al. 2016). As a matter of fact, the concept of school accountability has been ascertained by the USA by the introduction and implementation of the NCLB "No Child Left behind" policy which aims to ensure that all students' learning needs are to be met (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Additionally, according to Grauwe (2007), the concept of school inspection in the Middle East region was initially initiated shortly after independence.

It is fair to state that the school inspection system has witnessed various reforms over the years in a continuous effort to improve the process at all levels starting from its basic structure to its goals and processes (Al Kutich 2015). Therefore, the United Kingdom, a leading country in the educational system and educational quality, has replaced the HMI with the OFSTED in 1990 in an effort to enhance the quality of educational inspection introducing concepts such as school self-evaluation and school action plans that are based on inspection reports (Rosenthal 2004).

## **1.2 The need for school Inspection**

It is claimed by Etzioni (2016) that the underlying foundations of inspection systems in various organizations such as education, health care or public service, fundamentally align and consist with Bentham's proclamation that 'the more strictly we are watched, the better we behave'. In many countries, school inspection is utilized as a mean for monitoring and enhancing the educational quality of the

inspected schools (Klerks 2012). As a matter of fact, Ehren and Honingh (2012) stated that school inspection's central purpose is to guarantee that schools are providing educational services that meet the legal requirements of that country with insurance of the legitimacy of the expenditure of the financial support. However, and more importantly, the need for school inspection urges schools to provide a high-quality service to the students and to increase their attainment.

### **1.3 School inspection for school improvement**

While the topic of school inspection has been extensively researched, data on the relationship between school inspection and school improvement remains to be controversial. Indeed, various studies have been conducted to examine whether school inspection directly leads to school improvement, particularly on teaching and learning. However, little research has been conducted on the factors affecting the implementation of school inspection results and the proper way of bridging the gap between these two concepts. Not to mention that most of the studies were conducted in developed European countries with high educational standards such as the UK, Sweden, and the Netherlands whereas fewer studies are recorded within the Middle East region and developing countries (Al Kutich 2015).

As stated by De Wolf and Janssens (2007), conclusions from the literature review do not provide a clear answer on whether school inspections have a positive causal effect on school educational quality. Klerks (2012) firmly states that there is a common expectation of improvement from most inspectorates of education, which is generally related to the feedback given during the inspection visit and in the inspection report. As a matter of fact, results of the systemic review from Klerks (2012) research concluded that there is no evidence that directly links school improvement to school inspection. Controversially, a study by Rosenthal (2004) has contended that



inspection has negatively impacted students' performance in exams. Furthermore, other studies have showed that school inspection does not have any positive impact on classroom practice (Webb et al. 1998) and instead has proven to have no positive impact of teachers' emotions as well, a result that can be explained by teachers' negative perception of school inspectors and the school inspection process as a whole (Tunç, İnandı & Gündüz, 2015).

On the other hand, there are supporters of school inspections who perceive inspections as a tool for providing valuable feedback for educational institutions. These supporters argue that these organizations can benefit from an objective outsider judgment that intends to help one look and reflect at their own actions and behaviors as institutions might experience organizational blindness over time (Bitan, Haep & Steins 2014). Indeed, some studies, such as the one done by Mathews and Sammons (2004) have provided clear evidence on the positive impact inspection has on the quality improvement of low performing schools.

Therefore, achieving school improvement depends on actions taken towards the alignment of school improvement actions with the inspection framework thus leading to more effective teaching and learning (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007). Undeniably, with minimal research found on these actions needed to support school improvement through school inspection feedback, this research intends to shed the light on these issues giving a broader scope on how to effectively utilize inspection as a tool for improvement in the Middle East area, and more specifically the UAE particularly because there is limited literature on academic studies adhering the inspection practices in this country.

#### **1.4 Feedback as a tool for improvement**

Different research, such as the two case studies from (Chapman 2001; Ehren & Visscher 2008), were not able to establish a causal effect between school inspection and school improvement but instead proposed a connection between the two. Additionally, Klerks (2012) states that what appears to make a difference is the establishment of feedback on the forthcoming limitations, the evaluation of these limitations and their assessment as weak points, and the consensual agreement between both the school and the inspector on improvement activities to be done. Indeed, this argument grew in literature as further studies came into effect. An example of research done by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education on the effect of verbal feedback given to teachers after class observation showed that this feedback does not lead to behavioral changes of teachers (Roijmans 2010). The latter's conclusion was actually refuted by another study done by Dobblaer (2011) who showed that feedback does stimulate the development of teachers if inspectors are provided with feedback training. Indeed, the results of Chapman's (2001) study signified that if inspectors provided high-quality feedback to teachers, this would positively affect teachers' intention to change their classroom practices. Therefore, this research aims at studying the effect of feedback, specifically reflective feedback from school administration to teachers and vice versa, on the improvement process of educational institutions.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

The objective of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Examine the effect of reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection and school improvement.

2. Explore teachers' views on being an efficient asset in the school improvement plan committee.
3. Investigate the role of school leadership in establishing a compatible and supportive work environment to its teachers for better improvement.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

This study intends to answer the following primary research question and three subsequent questions

**Does teachers' reflective feedback on school inspection results moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement?**

- a. Will self-reflection on inspection results affect teachers' attitude towards the inspection process?
- b. Does involving teachers in the school improvement planning facilitate reaching the school targets more smoothly?
- c. What role does school leadership play to connect school inspection results and school improvement?

### **1.7 Significance, Scope and Structure of the Study**

With the increasing trend of using school inspection as a tool for measuring school performance, it is only fair to argue that this tool should be effectively used as a mean for school improvement. As research evidence on the effect of school inspection on school improvement continues to be controversial, and with the negative views associated with the quality of school inspection in UAE, this research aims to explore the role that school leadership plays in ensuring that the results of school inspection are properly used for school improvement. The empirical evidence provided by this study is intended to provide a guide map to school leadership teams and educational

authorities such as KHDA, ACTVET, and ADEK in providing how to utilize inspection feedback for school improvement. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it is the first academic research that targets reflective feedback as a process for school improvement. This research situates itself within the available literature and complements the findings providing an additional resource on educational quality.

In this research, a single case study on one of the UAE schools will be conducted using a mixed method approach. The research will be exploratory-based which will aim to investigate the effect of self-reflection (reflective feedback) on inspection results and having constructive communication between the leadership team and the teachers as well as the effect of involving teachers in the school improvement plan process on the general school improvement. Primary data was collected from a UAE based school using the triangulation of data collection through the use of results collected by "School Inspection for School Improvement" questionnaire, an interview done with the principal, and a focus group discussion done with a selected group of teachers to get in-depth answers. Moreover, key participants in the study are different subject teachers, the leadership team (Principal and head of departments (HODs)).

This study will be divided into five main chapters; each would be targeting a specific outcome to be presented. Chapter one serves as an introduction of this research by providing a brief background on the inspection process, school improvement and the controversial relationship between the two concepts. Moreover, chapter one gives the rationale, significance and research questions of this study. Chapter two, on the other hand, provides a profound literature review and the conceptual framework behind school inspection. Chapter three presents the used methodology in this study along with the sampling techniques, instruments used, and the type of research methods

adopted. Additionally, all ethical considerations and limitations, reliability and validity issues are discussed in this chapter. Chapter four focuses on the results and findings, whereas chapter five provides a summary of the findings along with the recommendations, further studies, and conclusion.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

As UAE aims to be a leading country in its educational system, many policies have been placed to monitor the quality of education in schools. One of these is the emergence of quality assurance bodies that governs and monitors the educational process. Keeping in mind that the inspection process itself whether conducted internally or externally, is regarded as a form of feedback (Bitan et al. 2014), it is important to state that school inspection main purpose is to achieve school improvement in the inspected schools. As this study aims at investigating the role of feedback and teachers' inclusion in decision making on that process, this chapter will be presenting past literature and studies regarding the school inspection process, school improvement, and feedback as a tool for improvement.

The chapter will initially present a general background on the inspection process as a form of accountability by presenting international studies on attitudes toward school inspection with a specific focus on the inspection process within the UAE. The chapter continues to present relevant research data on feedback in education while presenting the underlying theories behind learning through feedback; the chapter then ends with connecting feedback and school inspection with school improvement. As this study focuses on the leadership role in presenting constructive feedback to teachers, the chapter will additionally present previous literature regarding empowering teachers for school improvement.

## **2.1 School inspection**

As mentioned in the introduction, school inspections continue to be reinforced and introduced as a means for providing data-based quality development in education (Grek et al. 2009). As a matter of fact, the introduction of school inspection, as stated by Vanhoof & Van Petegem (2007), is generally justified by reasoning that since schools are now more responsible for the quality of the services that they provide, external inspections can play a significant role in this process. Though school inspection might have been intended to ensure the application of high standards in the educational institution, school inspections purpose has drifted from solely monitoring the quality of education to seeking for "improvement" of the inspected facilities (Ethren & Visscher 2008).

### **2.1.1 Theoretical issues and conceptual framework of school inspection**

Considering school inspection as a tool for external evaluation demands a prior knowledge to the underpinning theoretical grounds behind this practice. Two of the main theories related to the inspection process are the Scientific Management and Human Relations theories (Sarah 2015).

It has been stated by some scholars that the introduction of school inspection as a body for quality assurance accompanied, and was strengthened by, the introduction of the Classical Management theories. Different theories such as the Scientific Management theory by Fredrick Winston Taylor, the Bureaucratic Management by Max Weber, and the Administrative Management by Henry Fayol were interested in studying how to manage work and organizations more competently (Wertheim 2007; Sergiovanni & Starratt 2007). For the purpose of this study, only the Scientific Management theory will be elaborated.

### ***Scientific Management Theory***

The Scientific Management theory is a theory that was developed by an American Engineer called Fredrick Taylor. His theory was introduced in his book titled "The Principles of Scientific Management" (Sarah 2015). This theory of management was based on the analysis and synthesis of the workflow process that leads to the improvement of employees' productivity, saving of time and financial resources (Hoyle & Wallace 2006). Nonetheless, this theory was criticized for regarding employees as machines while demolishing their creativity (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). In his argument, Taylor claims employees need them to have a sense of compliance to their employers along with the ability to follow their superiors' instructors (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005).

Additionally, the theory proposes four distinctive approaches to increase the worker's productivity. The first of which is to break down the job into uniform and standardized units. The second one is to carefully select employees and constantly work on enhancing their professional training. The third approach is to use incentives and to continuously motivate the employees according to their devotion to the work. The last one concerns the control of the work process and associating the earnings to job performance.

As the theory grew more popular, different countries such as USA and UK linked it to the education field and then eventually to the school inspections domain. The effect of the Scientific Management theory was evident as governments used it as a basis for developing the science of job (Al Kutich 2015).



### ***Human Relations Theory***

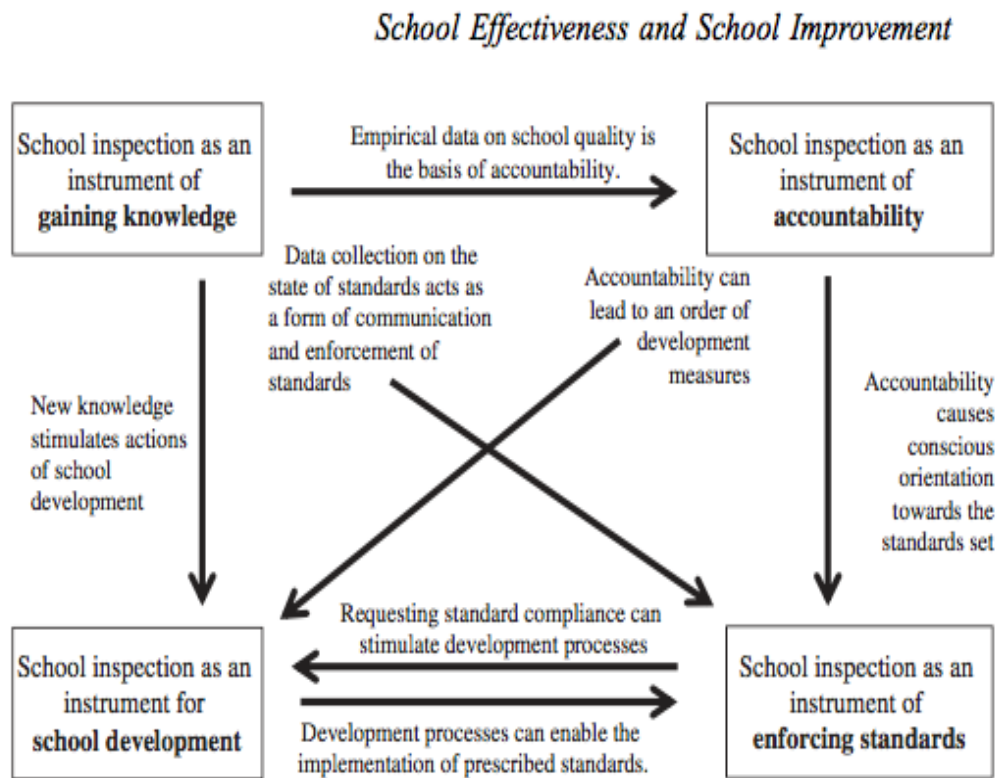
To better understand the rationale behind this study, the Human Relations theory is critical to be understood. The Human Relations theory, a theory introduced by Elton Mayo in the 1930s, proposes that employees' productivity can be enhanced if their social needs are met (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). In other words, the theory sheds the lights on the importance of involving the employees in the decision-making process in order to get the best out of them. Indeed, research done by Druker (1991) has proved that employees tend to be more creative when they are motivated. Drujer (1991) further adds that employees' need for recognition plays a vital role in determining their productivity. As a matter of fact, the Human Relations theory depicts that the workers' commitment to work and self-direction is positively correlated with meeting their social needs.

Hence, both the scientific approach of worker management from the Scientific Management theory and the social approach from the Human Relations theory combined underpin the theoretical framework in which this study will be founded on.

#### **2.1.2 School Inspection: How does it work?**

As presented by Lanwehr (2011), a comprehensive model consisting of four potential different effects that school inspection has is presented in fig 1. With school improvement being the central focus of this study, it is clear that school improvement is one of the main functions that school inspection affects (Gaertner, Wurster & Pant 2013) along with it serving as a tool for gaining knowledge, tool for accountability, and a tool for enforcing standards. Interesting enough, Landwehr (2011) argues that the act of generating knowledge does not happen by creating new information, but alternatively occurs by formalizing already perceived problems in the form of an official inspection report. Gaertner, Wurster & Pant (2013) further adds that by

publishing schools' problems into a formal inspection report, the inspectorate would be transforming them into something that can be authoritatively addressed both inside and outside the school premises. Indeed, this knowledge will eventually be utilized as a starting point for school improvement.



**Figure 1** Model of effects and effectiveness of school inspection by Landwehr (2011), p. 491

The second part of the cycle is using school inspection as an instrument of accountability. As a matter of fact, the knowledge gained and shared in the first part will be utilized as a basis for an accountability mechanism. This is true as inspection report can be utilized to publicly account for the quality of internal processes by both the school itself and school authorities (Gaertner, Wurster & Pant 2013). Generally, results of school inspection are shared between the inspectorates and the inspected school with an agreement on working the enhancement of the identified problems in which the school authority role, in this case, would be the monitoring of the attainment of the agreed-on goals. The third function for school inspection is

enforcing standards. To achieve the school improvement wanted, there is a critical need to understand the standards and criteria that the school is evaluated in order to have the appropriate activities that meet these criteria. In this sense, school inspection is considered as a tool for communicating official expectations and norms.

### **2.1.3 Stages of Inspection and School Evaluation**

Inspection is comprised of four distinct stages, which are successfully being followed by the inspection bodies in the UAE. The first stage is giving notice of inspection to the targeted school. The second stage, which is also referred to as the pre-inspection stage, includes background documentation collection. The third stage is the actual on-site inspection visits and observation, and the last stage is follow-up (OECD 2008).

#### ***Stage 1 Inspection notice***

The first stage comprises giving a prior notice for the targeted school and therefore giving them time to prepare for the required document collection.

#### ***Stage 2 Investigation stage***

The investigation stage encompasses the examination of the school's documents prior to the visit. This stage includes the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data such as curriculum documents, school improvement plans, educational policies, results of internal and external exams, related financial reports and a self-reflective report done by the school management on the current status of the school. Other related documents such as statistical reports and complaints are also considered. Additionally, questionnaires are normally sent to the school principal, the leadership team, teachers, students and parents for the collection of feedback.

#### ***Stage 3 On-Site visitation***

The intended purpose of this stage is the reviewing of the teaching and learning process in the inspected school. Additionally, the leadership process, as well as the

management process, are also reviewed (Rosenthal 2004). This process normally happens as teams of inspectors (around 10 to 15 members) work simultaneously to thoroughly assess the school (Eurydice 2004). The inspection team eventually gathers for discussions before writing their final report of the current status of the inspected school. School improvement recommendations are normally shared with the principal, leadership team, school board, and sometimes parents as well. It is important to note that teachers, who are an essential stakeholder in this process, are not involved in the report discussion stage.

#### ***Stage 4 Follow-ups***

During this stage, the quality of the schools is monitored by the respective educational authorities. This stage is important as it verifies the credibility of the written conclusions. It is also the stage where follow up is done on the attainment of the set targets that were recommended by the report. This is followed by the final stage which is the reporting stage. School inspection reports are published online in most of the cases where all stakeholders have access to them.

## **2.2 Feedback as a tool for improvement**

As school inspection itself is a form of a feedback system, this study argues that feedback in general, and reflective feedback in specific, can strongly support the learning process but only when certain criteria are met (Bitan et al. 2014).

### **2.2.1 Feedback and learning**

As stated by Hattie (2009), feedback plays a vital role in making the learning process an effective one. As a matter of fact, Villmeyer & Rheinburg (2005) argue that positive feedback in particular significantly escalates the acceptance of feedback and guides it towards improvement. Insights on the effect of feedback originate from

fundamental psychological research and its fields of application (Bitan et al. 2014). However, for feedback to be effective, it should have different criteria such as referring to a specific behavior, pinpointing the possibilities for improvement, and most importantly to be objective. According to Fengler (2010), feedback should not be associated with global behavior nor aimed at character traits.

In their study Bitan et al. (2014) state that individuals can experience feedback either directly or indirectly. On the direct or external level, individuals can receive feedback in the form of informal comments or formal evaluations. On the contrary, indirect feedback can be obtained by observing role models and using this observation as an empowerment tool. Moreover, Steins & Wicklund (1996) confirm that the ability of a person to use internal feedback develops with age as the ability to take someone else's perspective evolves over time. The importance of this kind of feedback lies in the fact that the better individuals can perceive themselves from an external angle, the better they can modify their behaviors according to certain standards as well as to critically reflect on their behaviors. This act, according to Duval & Silvia (2009) is labeled by social psychology as self-awareness.

### **2.2.2 Feedback in education**

The integration of an effective, as well as high-quality feedback within the educational setting, has been crucially identified as a fundamental part of the learning cycle (Ramsden 2003). Research results by Yorke (2003) emphasize the importance of feedback in improving attainment levels and equally underpin the obligation of integrating the feedback system in the learning experience. However, As Naroith (2010) argued in her thesis on constructive teacher feedback on the enrichment of pupils' performance in mathematics, to be effective, feedback needs to be constructive; that is, it should consist of established benchmarks of conduct and

performance as well as a reciprocal communication of both right and wrong doings. This has been equally suggested by Sangster and Overall (2006) who believe that giving constructive feedback conveys with it the implication that valuable information will be provided on how to improve your work. An equivocal study done by Martínez-Argüelles et al. (2015) on the students' perspective on the usefulness of feedback in e-learning setting has shown that indeed 90% of students believed in the importance of receiving feedback from their tutors. More importantly, the findings emphasize the importance of having personalized feedback which can be divided into two broader dimensions. The first feedback is the type that facilitates learning whereas the second is the motivational feedback which has been interestingly found to have a key role in enhancing students' satisfaction attainment of the studied group.

### **2.2.3 Underlying theories of learning through feedback**

In order to grasp an accurate view of how feedback affects learning, it is essential to consider the role that feedback plays within the different learning theories. As a matter of fact, Mory (2004) indicates that the role of feedback alternates depending on the learning theory implemented. For example, feedback provided within a behaviorist learning environment will be used for positive reinforcement or can be correspondingly used to highlight comparisons between situations and therefore encourage the application of learning to new situations (Schunk 2012). This type of feedback, however, according to Rawlins and Piskitt (2008) can be hardly used as an indication of how pupils can progress in forthcoming work. On the contrary, feedback given within a cognitive learning environment might be more focused on processes by presenting suggestions on different skills and strategies that can be used by the learners. Similarly, feedback given by teachers applying the constructivist theory of learning might be more focused on the encouragement of learners to revisit the

learned material by providing a different perspective of learning and keeping a relativist epistemology in account (Mory 2004).

#### **2.2.4 Reflection and reflective feedback**

In his paper on reflection as a goal for teacher education, Zeichner (2008) draws upon his vast experience in teaching and introduces the concept of reflection in teacher education settings in relation to the degree to which reflection has: 1) caused an undisputable educators' development, 2) positively contributed to the tightening of the gaps in educational quality between students , 3) pinpointed the lack of resemblance between images of teacher reflection in the literature and the actual conditions of teachers' work.

From one point of view, the international movement that led to considering reflection as a part of teacher education was essentially a reaction against viewing teachers as merely as technicians or passive participants in the educational system (Zeichner 2008). As a matter of fact, this reflective practice movement recognizes the importance of teachers as being active key players in articulating the purposes and ends of their works along with the school management. This movement similarly supports teachers being given leadership roles in their school as part of school reform. In another qualitative study that was done by Eroz-Tuga (2012), an investigation on the contribution of reflective feedback, using video recorded lessons, to the preparation of teacher trainees was done. It was suggested that the latter indeed helped teachers to become more aware and credible about their own teaching practices, which consequently contributed in helping them identify their limitations and strengths in teaching and directing them to find ways to amend their classroom performance. Thus, it can be deposited that reflection serves as a bridge between theory and practice, where it aims at integrating beliefs and images, hypothetical

knowledge and classroom encounters, both on a personal and collective level (Yüksel 2011).

### **2.3 The role of teacher leaders in school improvement**

Teacher leadership has become one of the recognized pillars of educational reform over the past few years. As Barth (2001) affirmed, for schools to improve, teacher leaders need to be effectively integrated within the educational process. As a matter of fact, the concept of teacher leadership has grown after several pieces of research such as the one done by Ingersoll, Sirinides, and Dougherty (2018) have suggested that teachers have a very limited role in decision making and more specifically in school improvement planning. Furthermore, research in the area of teacher leadership has been equivocal on the positive impact that teacher leaders have on their students, peer teachers, and the school administration as well (Birky, Shelton & Headley 2006).

#### **2.3.1 Definition of teacher leadership**

While the concept of “teacher as a leader and leader as a teacher” has been getting more attention (Birky, Shelton & Headley 2006), there has still been some differences in the actual definition of teacher leadership. In this study, Childs-Bowen et al.’s (2000) definition will be adopted as it conceives teachers as leaders when they work in proficient learning communities that can directly influence students’ learning cycle, provide a positive contribution to school improvement, instigate distinction in practice, and enable stakeholders to partake in educational development.

#### **2.3.2 Enriched participation**

As argued by York-Barr and Duke (2004), teacher leadership urges the participation of teachers which consequently leads to the development of greater responsibility and a sense of ownership towards fulfilling the established school goals. Indeed,



empowering teachers and allowing them to be part of the decision-making process has proven to make teachers more committed to the decisions made by the school administration (Akert & Martin 2012). This has been correspondingly supported by the results of HLM analyses which indicated that fourth graders achieved higher in both mathematics and reading when they attended schools that have high levels of teachers' collaboration for school improvement (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran 2007). Furthermore, Webb et al. (2004) have equally acknowledged that teachers need to perceive themselves as powerful leaders in order to induce change within their classrooms. Indeed, this positively affects teachers' morale and intensifies their self-efficacy.

### **2.3.3 Power Struggles**

Since the principals-teachers relationship has been well known to be a top-down relationship, it was insinuated by Moller & Pankake (2013) that struggles can indeed arise when the goals of the teachers and the principals are not matched. Consequently, researches have detailed three ways in which teacher leadership can help reduce these power struggles. To start with, when teachers are involved, they will have more information to base their decisions on and therefore would understand why those decisions were made. Also, it is well given that teacher leaders are usually those who can effectively communicate collective decisions with others within the inside and the outside of the school premises. Thirdly, teachers who do take leadership roles are considered to be more informed, independent, and responsible and less judgmental on the management decisions.

#### **2.3.4 Leadership Reciprocity**

Enlisting help from teacher leaders have now become an essential component of the school scheme if principals aim to meet the leadership demands mandated by the 21st century (Moller & Pankake 2006). Indeed, it is the ultimate duty of the principal to motivate and support teachers to develop into the leaders that they can be. As a matter of fact, the importance of "leadership reciprocity" was emphasized by Anderson (2004), as he believed that there is a reciprocal as well as a mutual influence of teacher leadership on principals and vice versa. Therefore, Anderson (2004) argued that it is the role of the principal to nurture and sharpen these leadership skills of his teachers because of the crucial role that principals have in both school improvement and teacher leadership.

#### **2.3.5 The role of Principal Leadership skills**

Based on what has been discussed so far, it becomes clear that creating effective teacher leaders mandates an organizational culture and groundwork that supports this type of leadership. Indeed, Ash and Persal (2000) contended that in order for the latter to happen, principals should possess a set of leadership skills that foster this positive environment. As identified by Akert & Martin (2012), different researches have indeed pinpointed crucial actions that compose principals' skills such as the ability to inaugurate mutual trust and respect, have a sense of collective directionality, implement distributed leadership, and allow individual expressions. This has been equally stressed by Childs-Bowen et. al (2000) who argued that principals need to be able to lay the grounds toward a trusted environment that can allow teachers to grow their leadership capabilities.

## **2.4 Chapter summary and conclusion**

This chapter has presented a complete summary of the theoretical framework that will be used in this research. General background on the inspection process as a form of accountability was provided. The chapter equally presented relevant research data on feedback in education while presenting the underlying theories behind learning through feedback and connecting feedback and school inspection with school improvement. A relevant literature review has been also done on the importance of nurturing teacher leaders in schools and the role of school leadership in this process.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Chapter three covers the methodological underpinning of this research. It provides a detailed overview of the research design, sample selection and participants, the instrumentation used while also tackling ethical considerations. Reliability and validity are two more issues that are elaborated in this chapter along with the limitations and implications that might be embedded within this research.

### **3.1 Research approach and methodology**

Saunders et al. (2012) classified research designs according to the intended purpose of the study. The three categories identified were; explanatory, descriptive, as well as exploratory types of studies. While descriptive studies tend to focus on the embellishment of an area without the actual need to test any form of interrelations, explanatory studies, as the name implies, tend to explain and test the relationship between two or more variables in nature. Exploratory studies on the other hand attempt to explore an area with a little understanding and presence in literature, which is the type of research design that was chosen in this research as it best serves its purpose.

As a matter of fact, as this research aims to explore the relationship between school inspection and school improvement while moderated by providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect and give feedback on the inspection results, a single case study using a mixed method approach was conducted to fulfill its exploratory nature similarly to what has been suggested by Yin (2011). The case study approach, along with its scientific credentials that it embeds, will provide an evidence-based platform

for specialized applications (Zucker 2009). As discussed by Zainal (2007), a case study is widely used when in-depth clarifications of a certain social behavior are sought after. This method allows the investigation and comprehension of complex issues, which is needed in this study. Indeed, this methodology has been widely used in fields of education (Gulsecen & Kubat 2006) and has been often perceived as an efficient tool for the preliminary, exploratory stage of a research project, and therefore is considered as a foundation for the development of the 'more structured' tools needed in experiments and surveys (Rowley 2002).

On one hand, the mixed method approach, which has been recognized by Denscombe (2008, p. 270-283) as a "third paradigm" for social science, was utilized. As a matter of fact, Denscombe (2008) emphasized the importance of the mixed methodology by providing some of its key benefits such as improving the precision of data, creating a comprehensive picture by providing complementary data from different resources, compensating certain strengths and weaknesses of different research methods, and providing an analysis platform for the findings by using opposing data.

Indeed, the qualitative nature of this approach is appropriate when exploring the different views of teachers and HoDs on how both can be involved in the enhancement of the decision-making process and school improvement planning. Additionally, this design was efficient while providing insight into the principal views on how teachers can be more effectively used in bridging the gap between school inspection results and school improvement. As a matter of fact, this qualitative approach is crucial in differentiating between individual views and giving a comprehensive rationalization of the targeted phenomena (Al Kutich 2015). The use of the qualitative research aspect in this exploratory approach was clearly justified as

Patton (2002) argues that this type of research empowers the researcher to have a broader perspective, and not to completely depend on statistics alone.

Nonetheless, the qualitative approach is usually effective when having few participants and therefore preventing the results from being representative of a wider sample of the population. To evade this setback, data collection was triangulated, that is, a variety of data collection methodologies were employed to guarantee the quality of the results. To serve this purpose, data from different stakeholders at different levels in the school were collected. This included the collection of data from teachers, head of departments, and the principal. A variety of data collection methods such as questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and document analysis were similarly used.

On the other hand, a quantitative approach was also used in this research to complement and validate the results achieved in the study. As confirmed by Creswell & Plano Clark (2007), using numbers in the quantitative approach is critical to achieve the anticipated findings and to warrant an unbiased and scientific approach to the investigation. Data were collected from a questionnaire that was sent to teachers and head teachers.

### **3.2 Selection of study site, sampling and participants**

Due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of this research, critical case sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling method, was utilized in the interviewee's selection process. According to Palinkas et al. (2013), this method is primarily useful in research with limited resources and studies where a single case can assist in the rationalization of the targeted phenomenon. This study was conducted in an educational institution which offers a variety of clusters and programs. Moreover, as the institution is not affiliated to the inspection bodies of KHDA and ADEK, a single

study approach was more appropriate to cater to its difference. Additionally, since inspection results in this school are not shared publicly as done with KHDA schools, the case study was chosen to be done at that site.

Based on what has preceded, the participants chosen in this research were the school teachers from different grade levels covering various subjects such as math, science, computer science, and English. Additionally, the leadership team which includes head teachers and the principal were similarly part of the study as they are considered key players in the school improvement process. As this research tackles school inspection and school improvement planning, the head of the school improvement committee were selected to participate in this study as well. Therefore, the total selected sample  $n=137$  participants (which includes 122 teachers, 7 HoDs, and 1 principal).

### **3.3 Instrumentation and data collection**

As this research uses the mixed research methodology, a triangulation of the data was considered to warrant the validity and accuracy of the collected data. Consequently, four different instruments were employed in this research, these are structured interviews, semi-structured questionnaire, focus group discussion which was complemented by data analysis all of which can be found in the appendix (A and B)

***Structured interviews:*** To answer the different research questions proposed in this research, and to gather insight on the post-inspection process from the leadership perspective, a structured interview was conducted with the principal. This research instrument has proven its significance as it is considered valuable in clarifying misconceptions and acquiring comprehensive data (Jay 2014). Additionally, this instrument while serving the qualitative nature of this study permits the interviewer to ask the interviewee more inquisitive questions and assists in facilitating the communications between them (Fontana & Frey, 1994)

As a matter of fact, Bryman (2004) in his book on social research methods have elaborated on how interview guides enable the researcher to have in-depth knowledge about the interviewees by entering their world from a human perspective. In this sense, Bryman (2004) argues that interviews get the best out of the interviewees by accommodating their individual differences and taking the participants points of views into consideration.

***Questionnaires:*** One of the main resources of information used in this study is a structured questionnaire which was employed to collect quantitative data from both teachers and head teachers to explore their views on including teachers in the decision-making process and the role of leadership in this matter. This research tool, which can be defined as a sequence or group of questions that are designed to elicit information from selected respondents, is highly used in quantitative research. It is characterized as a self-paced data collection form in which respondents present their opinions both freely and anonymously which consequently helps save the time for both the researcher and the participants. One advantage of using questionnaires as a research tool is the freedom in which the participants have in answering the questions without having the fear of being stereotyped or judged on their opinions. However, critics of this tool argue that some participants lack the motivation to fill in the questionnaire or to fully complete it and therefore resulting in low response rate or superficial answers (Tuckman & Harper 2012; Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011).

The qualitative data collected by the survey will be quantified by statistically analyzing the results given by the participants and relating the different sections to provide a comprehensive picture of the results. To improve the validity and reliability of the used scale, a pilot study was done before the actual survey was out. The feedback given was utilized for enhancing the survey's questions and their clarity. As



the majority of the questions were closed-ended questions, the widely used Likert scale was utilized (Likert 1932) using a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 is not true at all and 6 is unsure.

The used questionnaire is divided into 5 mains sections which followed the following outline:

**Section 1** Aimed at presenting an overview of the research, introducing the research goal and providing a consent form for participation in the survey.

**Section 2** aimed at collecting personal and background information form the participants such as gender, age, position, years of experience and history of school inspection involvement.

**Section 3** aimed at gathering teachers' perception of the leadership role in school improvement and how they perceive the improvement process to be taking place in their current school. Questions for this section were drawn back from a reliable scale that was previously used and tested by the Minnesota Department of Education.

**Section 4** which has similarly been drawn back from the Minnesota Department of Education scale, aimed at gathering teachers' views on their current involvement in the decision-making process and specifically in decisions related to school improvement.

**Section 5** generally encompassed open-ended questions that took the general opinion of teachers on whether they believe that providing them with the opportunity to reflect on the feedback given from the school inspection reports will enhance the school improvement process. Additionally, teachers and head of departments were given the opportunity to pin down the actions that should be done by both teachers and school leaders to better utilize school inspection results for school improvement.

***Focus groups:*** In an effort to have a triangulation of the data presented, another qualitative instrument was used in this study, which is the focus discussion group. This instrument, as suggested by McNamara (2006) is useful for collecting data from participants who have a common background and similar experiences in regard to the questioned case, which positively applies in this single case study. Additionally, this technique was successfully conducted by using a predetermined interview guide as recommended by McNamara (2006). Indeed, this technique is similar to interviews in the sense that it involves face-to-face interactions; however, unlike one to one interview, this technique interviews a group of participants at the same time (Fontana & Frey 1994).

For this research, 5 teachers from different subject departments were chosen to participate in the focus group using the convenience sampling technique that is commonly used in this instrumentation (Nagle & Williams 2013). These teachers were nominated by their HoDs as they are considered as key players in their groups, have presented good leadership skills during the school year, and have been involved in at least 1 school inspection. The head of the school improvement committee was also part of the focus group as the researcher aimed at collecting different perspectives at the same time. Therefore, 6 total participants contributed in the focus group, an optimal number for this type of instrument as mentioned by Nagle & Williams (2013). The discussion questions lasted for around one hour where the discussion was considered to be productive, beneficial, and have provided in-depth knowledge to the targeted question. To overcome any shortcomings that might result from using this instrument, the researcher used a pre-arranged list of key questions to start the discussion but allowed questions to be added when needed.

**Documentary Review:** Besides the collected primary data, which included data from interviews, questionnaires, and the focus discussion group, secondary data was gathered by document review and analysis. The primary sources of documents included; the MOE inspection guidelines, the school inspection reports for the past three years, the school improvement plans for the past three years and documents as well as any related journals, books, and literature of school inspection and school improvement. The significance of written data lies in the fact that they provide steady historical explanations for the research area in question (Denscombe 1998). Indeed, data collected by written resources has proven to be more beneficial than verbal data due to the ease of access to the material and therefore less time consuming than other methods (Hodder, 1994). However, critics of this qualitative method, such Brock-Utne (2006) argue that documents can be outdated and therefore their validity can be questioned.

### **3.4 Research procedures, validity, and reliability**

Before starting this study, the researcher conducted a thorough and extensive literature review on the intended topic of research with an emphasis on the three main topics that need to be studied, that is; school inspection, school improvement, and feedback. The researcher identified the gap in the literature and accordingly shaped their research questions. Relevant journal articles and researches were extracted from reliable journal sites and the British University library website. Additionally, the researcher collected the related school improvement plan documents and inspection results from the school intended to be studied. Furthermore, school background information was collected from the staff portal link after getting the required authorization.

Based on the read literature, the survey questions for both teachers and head of departments were formulated to serve the purpose of the study. Similarly, interview guide questions for the school principal as well as the interview guide for the focus group were prepared prior to the study.

The researcher started their methodology process by administering the questionnaire to both teachers and HoDs knowing that the reply period might take a long time. The questionnaire was shared through emails and was conducted using the google form survey feature making it easily accessible to all the participants and understandable as all teachers use google form as a part of their school work.

The interview with the principal was then set by getting initial verbal approval from him which was then followed by setting a specific date for the interview. The interview guide was shared with the principal via email before the interview as requested by the principal to ensure proper preparation for the questions. The interview was recorded while notes were taken during the interview as well. Transcription of the recorded data was done within a 48 hours' time frame.

In order to get an in-depth data about the studied topic, and to overcome the shortcoming of surveys where most of the utilized questions are closed-ended, a focus group was asked to participate in this research to enrich the qualitative nature of the study and provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Group interaction between the participants was encouraged to make connections to the different conceptions presented, an advantage that focus groups have over individual interviews (Nagle & Williams 2013).

As validity and reliability are two essential pillars for a successful study, these were also considered while conducting the research. On one hand, the validity of a study is an indication to how much your study is pertinent and how closely does it measure the

issue that it claims to be assessing (Cohen, Manion & Keith, 2005). According to Cohen, Manion, and Keith (2005), this can be measured in various methods such as honesty of the results, and the depth of the data presented and collected. As a matter of fact, validity applies equally to both the study's design and methodology.

Consequently, to ascertain the validity of this research, the survey questions were sent to the dissertation supervisor, who is an expert on research methods and have extensive experience on the studied area, for face validation. Accordingly, proper review and modifications were made to the questions as per his recommendations. As a second step for validation, the questionnaire was successfully piloted by teachers from the same school who have extensive experience in teaching and learning and are considered experts in their areas.

On the other hand, although reliability is a concept that is most commonly used in quantitative research, the notion is still used in different types of research (Golafshani 2003). Reliability can be defined as the measure of consistency or the stability of the measured test results. To broaden the range of conceptualization of reliability and revealing the resemblance between the concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.316) explicates that '[s]ince there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability;]'. Building on what has proceeded, it can be suggested that the reliability of this research has been considered in which external reliability was ensured by drawing back the survey questions on a reliable scale that was previously used and tested by the Minnesota Department of Education. Furthermore, internal reliability was ascertained by the use of the pilot study.

While ensuring reliability and validity of this research, the need for simple and comprehensible questions was pinpointed as it was recognized that most participants

will tend not to answer extensive questions and may struggle with the academic language since some participants have a degree in the subject they teach but do not have an educational degree. Consequently, survey questions and interview guides were modified according to the need.

Data collection process lasted for two months, in which access to the survey was given through the google form link and was readily available for the participants. Additionally, gentle reminders were sent to encourage participation in order to have a good response rate. Results collected from the questionnaire were properly analyzed using the statistical feature in google form in addition to the use of SPSS, the statistical package for social science, to elaborate on the results. Additionally, data was cleaned by deleting any open-ended answers that were irrelevant to the question.

On the other hand, and since this research employed the mixed methods approach, data collected from both the principal interview and the focus group was properly summarized and organized into tables as recommended by Chapman (2002). Data was then promptly analyzed and classified under the proper research objective thus presenting the voices of the participants and consequently supporting the results collected by the quantitative instruments (Chapman 2001).

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

As emphasized by Bryman (2004) and Cozby (2007), ethical issues are a vital concern for social science researchers, and therefore should be properly considered. This has been successfully accomplished in this research as all ethical considerations were accounted for. As a matter of fact, required consent for participation in this study was first taken verbally and then documented on paper with the proper signatures. Moreover, the consent form was embedded within the questionnaire shared to ensure that all participants have willingly agreed to participate.

As emphasized by Fontana and Frey (1994), a mutual agreement on the subsequent ethical issues arising from the participation in the study is essential to ensure that participants are willingly participating. This was successfully achieved by ensuring the confidentiality of the participants by not disclosing the collected results and ensuring the anonymity of participants in the questionnaire.

Moreover, the purpose and objectives of the research were accurately shared with the participants as they were presented on the first page of the questionnaire. Similarly, the objectives were clearly stated at the beginning of the interview and the focus discussion group session. To ensure the freedom of participation with no external pressure, the survey was sent by email providing that it contains the email of the researcher for any further clarifications that they might request. Additionally, coding of names was utilized to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

### **3.6. Delimitation of the Study**

It is important to mention that as this study is a single case study, it is confined to study the effect of using reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection and school improvement in one school only. The selected school has its own designed curriculum and therefore generalization of the results might prove to be an obstacle. However, this selection is justified as the selected area of study is general and does not heavily depend on the type of school investigated and has more to do with the type of leadership involved.

### **3.7. Limitation and Implications of the Study**

The approach used in this study might convey with it a string of impending limitations. One of the key limitations is having a fairly small sample due to time constraints and the selection of a single case study approach. Consequently, a

generalization of results based on the chosen sample will be challenging. Nonetheless, in an effort to validate the outcomes, results from previous studies in literature reviews will be used to support the collected results. Although getting a high a response rate from participants was fairly problematic at the beginning as some respondents were busy and had no time to participate, proper follow up was done to ensure the participation of a big sample. As a matter of fact, a high response rate was successfully achieved in the questionnaire, which is a good indication for generalization purposes.



## Chapter 4 Results and Analysis

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study in which a thorough data analysis is done while guided by the research objectives of this study; namely; examine the effect of reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection and school improvement, explore teachers' views on being an efficient asset in the school improvement plan committee, and investigate the role of school leadership in establishing a compatible and supportive work environment to its teachers. In line with these objectives, the research questions can be summed up as:

**Does teachers' reflective feedback on school inspection results moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement?**

- a. Will self-reflection on inspection results affect teachers' attitude towards the inspection process?
- b. Does involving teachers in the school improvement planning facilitate reaching the school targets more smoothly?
- c. What role does school leadership play to connect school inspection results and school improvement?

**The population of the study:** taking into consideration the nature of this case study and providing the staff data of the studied school (122 teachers, 7 head of departments and 1 principal), the population of this case study can be summarized in table 1 which illustrates the three different data collection methods that were used in the study. It is important to note that generally the participation rates, which are shown in table 1,

demonstrates a fairly high rate and therefore insinuates solid results that can be useful for generalization purposes.

	Principal	Head of Departments	Teachers
<b>Participation rate%</b>	1 (100%)	6 (85.7%)	74 (60.7 %)
Questionnaire	No	Yes	Yes
Interview	Yes	No	No
Focus discussion group	No	No	Yes

**Table 1** Participation distribution

#### 4.1 Analysis of Participants' Background

The participants in this study included different stakeholders from the school including the principal, head of departments, and teachers all of which have key positions in the educational system and can play a critical role in the educational reform process.

**Gender information:** As shown in table 2, the total number of participants in the study is n=81, out of which n=29 (35.8%) are males, while the majority of the participants were females n=52 (64.2%). More specifically, 4 (66.7%) head teachers were females and 2 (33.3%) were males, compared to n=48 (64.9%) female teachers against n=26 (35.1%) male teachers. The dominance of females can be explained by the percentage of female and male teachers in the school in general as the school has more female staff than male staff, which is common in schools of UAE as teaching is considered to be more of a female profession.

			Gender		Total
			Female	Male	
Position	HoDs	Count	4	2	6
		% within Position	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Gender	7.7%	6.9%	7.4%
	Principal	Count	0	1	1
		% within Position	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender	0.0%	3.4%	1.2%
	Teacher	Count	48	26	74
		% within Position	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
		% within Gender	92.3%	89.7%	91.4%
Total		Count	52	29	81
		% within Position	64.2%	35.8%	100.0%
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 2** Gender information across participants' position

**Age range:** table 3 signposts that the most dominant age group within the participants is 30-39 with a count of n=42 (51.9%). This signifies that most of the staff have enough experience to have a valid input in the study. As a matter of fact, the table shows that only n=6 (7.4%) is in the age range of 21-29 while the rest is above that age range.

			Age Group					Total
			21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	> 60	
Position	HoDs	Count	0	6	0	0	0	6
		% within position	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within age Group	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
	Principal	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1
		% within Position	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within age Group	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	1.2%
	Teacher	Count	6	36	22	8	2	74
		% within Position	8.1%	48.6%	29.7%	10.8%	2.7%	100.0%
		% within age Group	100.0%	85.7%	100.0%	88.9%	100.0%	91.4%
Total		Count	6	42	22	9	2	81
		% within Position	7.4%	51.9%	27.2%	11.1%	2.5%	100.0%
		% within age Group	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 3** Age information across participants' position

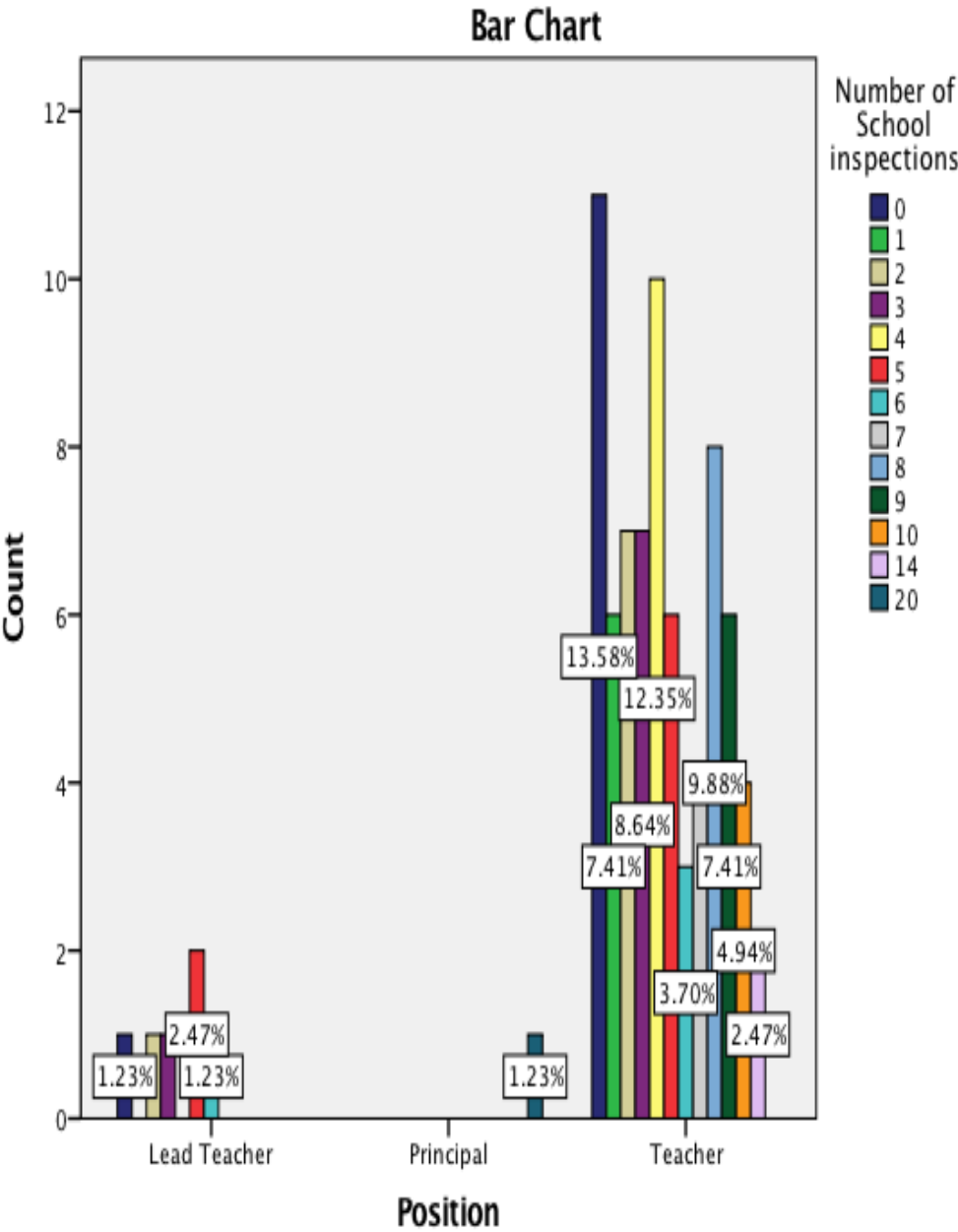
**Education level:** As shown in table 3, n= 43 (53.1%) of participants have acquired a master's degree indicating a high level of education across the participants which signifies the high quality of staff that is recruited in the school campus. As for the leadership team, only n=2 (33.3%) of HoDs have acquired higher education degree while rest have either a bachelor's degree or a post graduate diploma. This fairly indicates that the level of mid leadership might not be well-qualified to lead the school for better educational quality. This is in contrary to the high percentage of teachers who make up 93% of master's degree holders across the three positions. This again sheds the lights on the importance of involving those vital stakeholders in the school improvement process.

			Education Level					Total
			Bachelor's degree	Diploma	Master's degree	Others	Postgraduate diploma	
Position	HoDs	Count	2	0	2	0	2	6
		% within Position	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	7.7%	0.0%	4.7%	0.0%	25.0%	7.4%
	Principal	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
		% within Position	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
	Teacher	Count	24	2	40	2	6	74
		% within Position	32.4%	2.7%	54.1%	2.7%	8.1%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	92.3%	100.0%	93.0%	100.0%	75.0%	91.4%
Total		Count	26	2	43	2	8	81
		% within Position	32.1%	2.5%	53.1%	2.5%	9.9%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 4** Education level across participants' position

**Inspection background:** As the bar graph in fig 2 illustrates, only n=12 (14.8%) of the participants had no previous experience with the inspection process, which can be justified by newly fresh graduates who joined the school or experienced teachers who came from overseas who had no similar inspection experience from before. The statistics in table 5 highlights that where n=5 (83.3%) of head teachers have participated in the previous school inspection, only n=39 (52.7%) of teachers were part of the preceding inspection process, suggesting a high number of new recruits

and therefore the fairly elevated turnover rate of the teaching staff. More detailed data can be obtained from fig. 2 and table 5.



**Figure 2** Number of school inspection across participants' position

			Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at?		Total
			No	Yes	
Position	HoDs	Count	1	5	6
		% within Position	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
		% within Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at?	2.7%	11.4%	7.4%
	Principal	Count	1	0	1
		% within Position	100.0 %	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at?	2.7%	0.0%	1.2%
	Teacher	Count	35	39	74
		% within Position	47.3%	52.7%	100.0%
		% within Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at?	94.6%	88.6%	91.4%
Total		Count	37	44	81
		% within Position	45.7%	54.3%	100.0%
		% within Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at?	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0%

**Table 5** Participation in previous school inspection process across the participants' positions

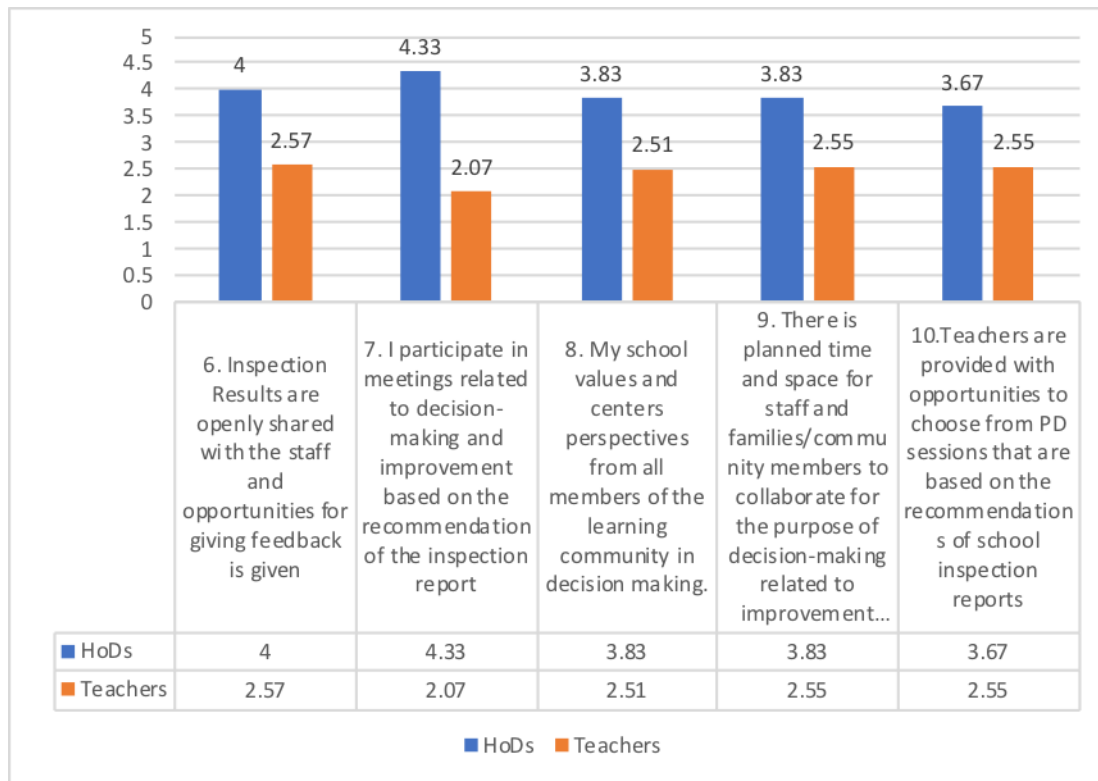
## 4.2 Reflective feedback for school improvement

To recapitulate, the main research question aimed at exploring if teachers' reflective feedback on school inspection results moderates school inspection and school improvement. Therefore, to achieve this target, the first sub-question; that is, will self-reflection on inspection results affect teachers' attitude towards the inspection process was investigated.

### 4.2.1 Transparency in sharing school inspection results

Results from the questionnaire given to teachers and head teachers showed a clear difference between the views of both of the targeted respondents on how they perceived their role in school improvement in the school under study. Results shown

in table 6 indicate that n=5 (66.7 %) of HoDs believe that inspection results are openly shared with the staff and opportunities for giving feedback is given compared to n=41 (55.4%) teachers who believe that this is either not true at all or only somewhat true. This is similarly reflected in fig 3 which shows a clear difference between the mean of head teachers (M=4.00) compared to the mean of teachers (M=2.57). The results indicate a clear gap between the views of the HoDs who represent school administration in this study and teachers working at this educational institute. This has been equally bespoken in the data collected through the focus group where the respondents agreed that there is a lack of transparency in sharing the school inspection results. As a matter of fact, the latter has been similarly affirmed in the interview of the school principal when asked whether inspection results were openly shared with teachers. The principal added that "school inspection results are normally shared with head teachers and school improvement committee members". This is particularly true as in most of the cases positive feedback is shared with teachers in staff meetings whereas negative feedback or weak points are refrained from being openly shared. More specifically, any feedback related to the management is not shared with teachers. Interestingly enough, the principal drew that back on the lack of a culture of transparency in the campus which is one of the reasons for not taking teachers' feedback on school inspection results. The principal adds "from the perspective of the management, to be transparent of the weak inspection result can demoralize the system so it is better off not informing the staff".



**Figure 3** Involvement in School Improvement and Decision-Making Mean Comparison

		1		2		3		4		5		6	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>6. Inspection Results are openly shared with the staff and opportunities for giving feedback is given</b>	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	4	66.7	1	16.7	0	0.0
	Teachers	19	25.7	22	29.7	17	23.0	5	6.8	10	13.5	1	1.4
<b>7. I participate in meetings related to decision-making and improvement based on the recommendation of the inspection report</b>	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0
	Teachers	27	36.5	28	37.8	10	13.5	5	6.8	4	5.4	0	0.0
<b>8. My school values and centers perspectives from all members of the learning community in decision making.</b>	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Teachers	12	16.2	33	44.6	16	21.6	7	9.5	4	5.4	2	2.7
<b>9. There is planned time and space for staff and families/community members to collaborate for the purpose of decision-making related to improvement of school policies and practices.</b>	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Teachers	15	20.3	30	40.5	16	21.6	4	5.4	4	5.4	5	6.8
<b>10. Teachers are provided with opportunities to choose from PD sessions that are based on the recommendations of school inspection reports</b>	HoDs	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0%	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Teachers	15	20.3	28	37.8	18	24.3	4	5.4	6	8.1	3	4.1

**Table 6** Distribution of Lead teachers and teachers views on Involvement in School Improvement and Decision Making (HoDs n=6 and teachers n=74)

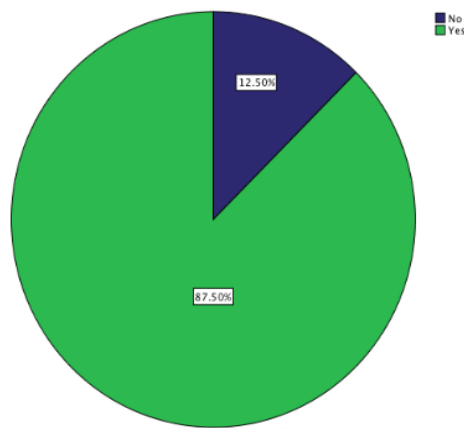


#### **4.2.2 Reflective feedback on school inspection results**

To answer the question of whether receiving and giving reflective feedback on school inspection results affect the school improvement process, participants were asked about their opinion regarding this matter. As shown in fig 4, 87.50% of the respondents believe that feedback on school inspection results will indeed enhance the school improvement process. Most of the participants emphasized that there would be no improvement without the input of all stakeholders, and therefore teachers should be an integral part of this process. Others responded that when teachers are given the chance to participate and reflect on the inspection results this would increase their sense of responsibility as well as a sense of worthiness and belongingness. In other words, this would make teachers accountable for their actions. This has been equally believed by participant 3 in the focus group who added that "teachers are the core of the school and they are in contact with students on daily basis, so they would have great ideas to enhance the school performance and increase student support". Another participant added, "as a teacher, I don't want to be isolated or be passive about the improvement processes". This comes along the perception that feedback on inspection often highlights areas of strengths and weaknesses, and hence it would help teachers in adjusting, readjusting, or modifying their practice in the school. Teachers should be provided an opportunity to reflect on the school inspection process in a constructive manner as the big bulk of the inspection depends on teachers' work, which means they should be involved in decision making.

Moreover, the principal's feedback comes to complement the other respondents' opinions as he believes that teachers are the frontline of the system; and thus, their efforts and contributions collectively will affect the overall performance of the system. He then adds "teachers' feedback serves as a direct reflection of the true state

of education in the academy. Aside from it, their feedback will serve as an internal motivation and challenge for the teachers to come up with a better teaching and learning plan". However, it is important to note that there are some respondents who stated that the administrators, who have the authority, should be trusted to make the needed adjustments without the consultation of other stakeholders, namely teachers. This obviously can be drawn back to an old school top-down management style in which teachers are considered as receivers of commands without having the opportunity of input.



**Figure 4** Teachers views on the effect of self-reflection on inspection results on school improvement

### **4.3 Involvement in school improvement and decision making**

In this section, the second sub-question; that is, does involving teachers in the school improvement planning facilitate reaching the school targets more smoothly was investigated.

#### **4.3.1 Teachers' vs. HoDs views on involvement in school improvement and decision making**

When asked about how they perceived their involvement in school improvement and decision making, another gap between the views of teachers and HoDs has emerged. This was evident as n=4 (66.7%) of HoDs agree that they participate in meetings related to decision making and improvement based on the recommendation of the

inspection reports, which can be clearly drawn back to the essence of their leadership role, as shown in table 6. On the contrary, this view was not similarly shared between teachers where  $n=56$  (74.3%) believe that this is indeed not true at all or only partly true. The latter result can indeed explain why the results from the questionnaire shown in fig. 3 indicates a mean ( $M=3.83$ ) for head teachers who believe that the school values and centers perspectives from all members of the learning community in decision making in comparison to lower mean ( $M=2.51$ ) for teachers.

As a matter of fact, when asked if involving teachers in the school improvement planning facilitate reaching the school targets more smoothly, participant 1 from the focus group responded "definitely, when they feel they[teachers] are involved this will give them a sense of ownership, so they would like to work on what they decided from the beginning and it will make them more open to the ideas of change and improving the school in general. It will also give them a sense of belonging." This was similarly assured by participant 2 who believes that when change comes from teachers it will become more realistic and implementable, while when it comes from the management it will be more theoretically implementable. This was equally suggested by the principal who believes that school targets and recommendations are easily implemented by the teachers once the teacher feels their contributions were being valued and plans are created based on the real conditions of the teaching-learning process. Having said that, teachers can easily achieve the targets if they were properly informed. Indeed, first-hand suggestions and decision-making create clarity of implementation of the plan.

#### **4.3.2 Collaboration for school improvement**

From the principal's perspective, and when asked whether teachers are involved in school improvement planning, the latter acknowledged that some selected teachers are

indeed part of the school improvement committee, which mainly consists of the management team, HoDs and very minimal selected teachers based upon the recommendation of the principal and administration staff. According to the principal, teachers' input is indirectly channeled through departmental meetings, casual interviews, and whole staff survey. As a matter of fact, these results are critically important as they pinpoint the gap in the school, as teachers are not aware of their participation in the school improvement process and believe that improvement plan they are doing is extra work and does not relate to the previous inspection results. This gap was evidently translated in the results drawn from the questionnaire which indicates that n=45 (60.8%) of teachers believe that there is no planned time and space for stakeholders and members of the learning community to collaborate for the purpose of decision making, compared to 83.3% of lead teachers who believe otherwise (table 6). However, it is important to note that 6.8% of teachers were unsure about their answer which reflects the mean ( $M=2.55$ ) shown in fig. 3.

This is similarly evident in the document analysis done on the inspection reports which indicates that while distributed leadership was evident within the educational staff during the academic year of 2016-2017, the 2018 report contradicts this information showing an evident decrease in the leadership and management standard (Standard 6) which might be attributed to the change of management and the difference in the leadership style of the new principal. This has been translated in the decrease in attributes such as self-evaluation and improvement planning school, governance, management, staffing, facilities and resources which has been one of the motives behind conducting this study.

#### **4.4 Leadership role in school improvement**

In this section, data from the questionnaire, focus group, and the principal's interview is gathered to provide an illustrative idea on the role of leadership in school improvement, and more specifically, in bridging the gap between school inspection and school improvement.

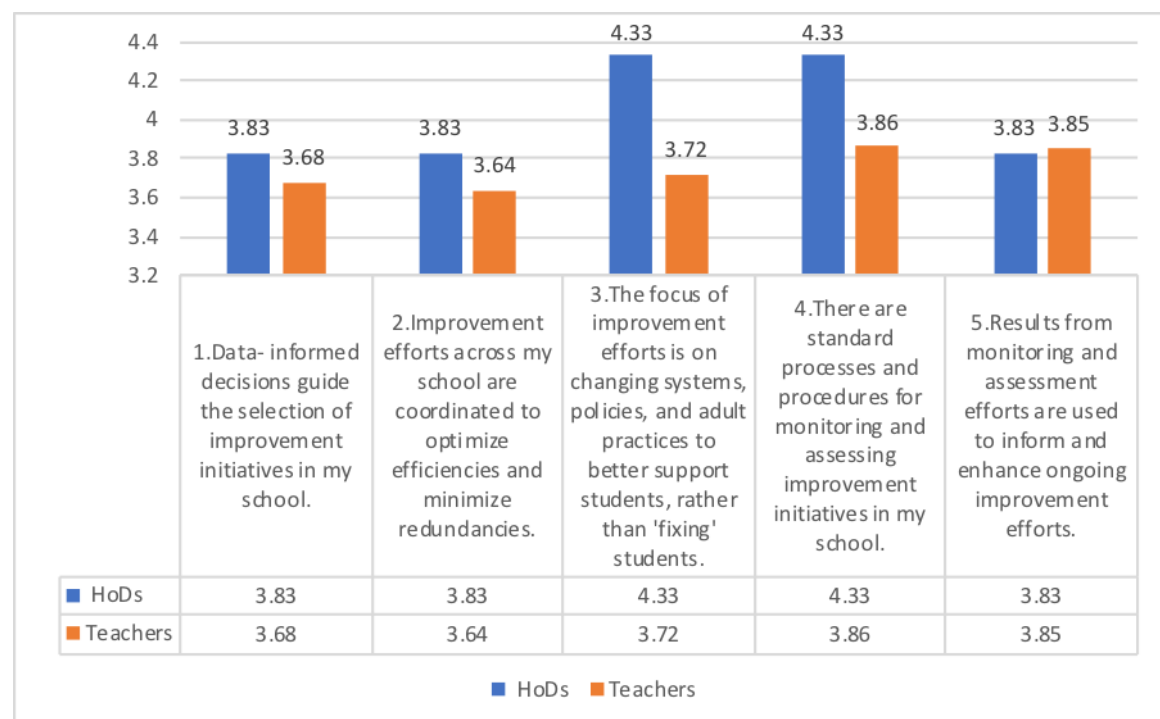
#### **4.4.1 Teachers and HoDs' views on the role of leadership in school improvement**

As opposed to the results found in fig. 3, a mean comparison between the perception of the leadership role in school improvement between teachers and HoDs (shown in fig. 5) reveals that both perceive the role of leadership in the studied institute in the same manner for most of the sub-questions. As a matter of fact, both teachers and head teachers believe that data-informed decisions guide the selection of improvement initiatives in the school with a mean of  $M=3.83$  and  $M=3.68$  for HoDs and teachers respectively. This was clearly evident from the interview with the principal who described the procedure of school improvement as follow: 1) the principal will create the school improvement plan team upon the recommendation of the HoDs and the management. 2) Together with the selected team, the principal and head of departments will develop a school improvement plan for academics and the vice principal for administration will develop an administrative plan with the counselors and other staff.

Additionally,  $n=5$  (83.3%) of head teachers believe that efficiencies optimization and redundancies' minimization were the by-products of close coordination to implement improvements compared to 63.5% of teachers who similarly contemplate that this is true or mostly true as shown in table 7. Moreover, as shown in fig 5 the primordial observation made by the respondents was that improvement efforts geared towards supporting students rather than "fixing" them although the means show a slight

difference (M=4.33, M=3.86 for HoDs and teachers respectively). This can be attributed to 4.1% of teachers who were unsure of their answer.

Similar to the other sub-questions, results from the questionnaire revealed that both teachers and head teachers agreed that there are indeed standard processes and procedures for monitoring and assessing improvement initiatives in their school. Moreover, the respondents were one in expressing that enhancement of ongoing improvements is made possible by the results in monitoring and assessment efforts which can be seen in fig. 5 and table 7.



**Figure 5** Leadership Role in School Improvement Mean Comparison

		<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>6</b>	
		<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1.Data- informed decisions guide the selection of improvement initiatives in my school.	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Teachers	2	2.7	6	8.1	24	32.4	27	36.5	12	16.2	3	4.1
2.Improvement efforts across my school are coordinated to optimize efficiencies and minimize redundancies.	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	3	50	1	16.7	0	0.0
	Teachers	1	1.4	10	13.5	24	32.4	23	31.1	12	16.2	4	5.4
3.The focus of improvement efforts is on changing systems, policies, and adult practices to better support students, rather than 'fixing' students.	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0
	Teachers	2	2.7	6	8.1	20	27.0	32	43.2	11	14.9	3	4.1
4.There are standard processes and procedures for monitoring and assessing improvement initiatives in my school.	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0
	Teachers	0	0.0	6	7.5	23	31.1	24	32.4	17	23.0	4	5.4
5.Results from monitoring and assessment efforts are used to inform and enhance ongoing improvement efforts.	HoDs	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	33.3	3	50	1	16.7	0	0.0
	Teachers	2	2.5	7	8.8	18	22.5	31	38.8	18	22.5	4	5.0

**Table 7** Distribution of Lead teachers and teachers views on Leadership Role in School Improvement (HoDs n=6 and teachers n=74)

#### 4.4.2 Leadership actions for teachers' involvement in decision making

When asked about the role of leadership in the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process, a critical term "teacher leaders" was discussed by the principal at the end of his interview. The principal acknowledged that it is a primary role of the leadership team to create teacher leaders to achieve sustainability of the system. This can be done through individualized teacher programs with an objective of enhancing the leadership skills of all teachers.

More specifically, and on the topic of teacher involvement with school improvement based on the inspection results, participant 4 from the focus group asserted that the most important part is that whatever feedback the school gets from inspection it should be used to improve the school's wellbeing which will eventually influence the improvement plan and the school strategic plan. Participant 4 further questions "if they don't connect it and use what they get then what is the use of the inspection?"

Inspection should be one of the tools to get to school improvement". Additionally, results from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire revealed that the majority of teachers believe that the management should put more realistic targets to be achieved and be more open to criticism. One of the respondents further adds that school leadership should build on the results of the school inspection where any recommendation that is given should be broken down and tackled to improve on. A general consensus on the need of having more meetings/workshops to make teachers more aware of inspection results such as conducting a workshop to explain for the new teachers how the inspection conducted in schools, or a workshop or that explain the importance of inspection in the teaching process. Additionally, during regular school meetings, there should be a focus on the effect of inspection on students' academic level. This should be done simultaneously while sharing the decisions and the results with all teachers and giving them the opportunity to be part of changes due to their preferences and potentials as well as providing and offering more professional development (PD) sessions that target teachers' weaknesses that are reflected in the inspection report. Indeed, this was evidently reflected in table 6 which indicated that the majority of teachers (58.1%) believe that they are not provided with PD sessions that match the recommendations of the inspection reports.

#### **4.4.3 Teachers' actions for a better utilization of inspection results for school improvement**

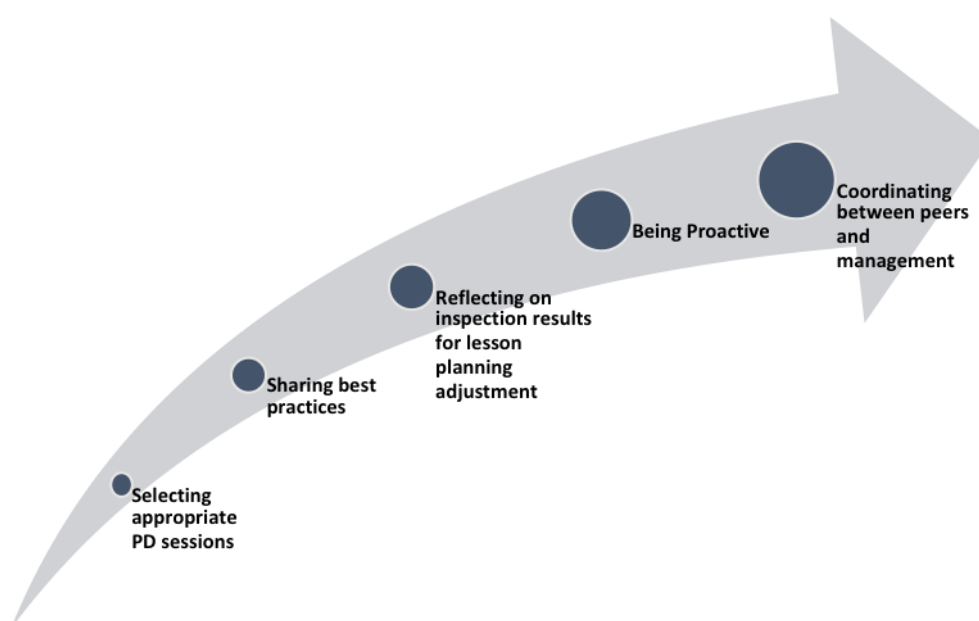
Having in mind that the school improvement process depends on all stakeholders, it is only fair to believe that actions for improvement should come from within teachers as well. As summarized in fig 6, when teachers were asked about how they perceived their role to be in order to connect between school inspection and school improvement, most of the teachers agreed that educators should be proactive and



should participate more effectively in school committees as this will help them feel more committed to the school and increase their sense of belongingness.

Other suggested actions were to use the feedback provided by the principal and head teachers to enhance the methods of teaching in classes. Moreover, one of the respondents emphasized the need to use the inspection results to modify lesson planning and focus on interactive teaching methods in classes. However, the latter can only be done with proper coordination between peers and higher management to come with a roadmap for the needed improvements.

Another chief action that was suggested by the majority of the respondents was the importance of sharing best practices and experiences with peer teachers, a practice that is becoming more common in school nowadays. Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of providing them with relevant PD sessions that targets their weaknesses and giving them the opportunity to choose from the sessions that can truly benefit them.



**Figure 6** Teachers' actions toward school improvement

#### **4.4 Obstacles behind the lack of teachers' involvement in decision making**

As highlighted in the previous sections, the majority of teachers did not feel that they are part of the decision-making process or part of the school improvement planning. Results from this study revealed several factors which are summarized below.

##### **4.4.1 Lack of transparency**

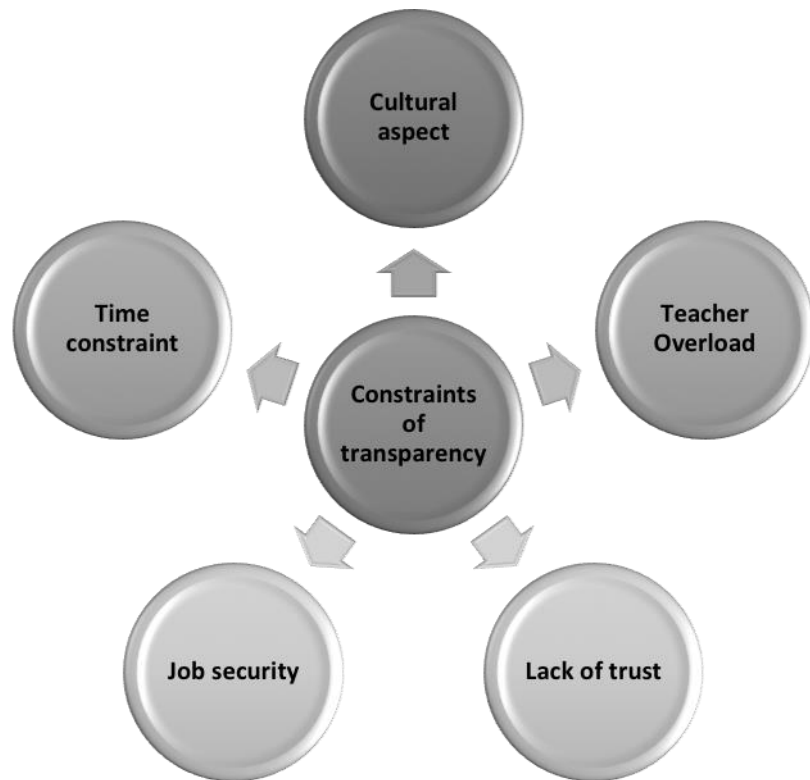
One of the major obstacles that were discussed, and generally agreed on, in the focus group interview was the lack of transparency in the studied school and in most of U.A.E school in general. Participants believed that both teachers and management are not open to each other. Participant 1 said, "everyone thinks that no one is doing their job no matter which side we are talking about, they will always see that the other side is not doing their job which demotivates people and just makes people think that it is not right" which shows the lack of trust between teachers and the management. To elaborate on this topic, teachers from the focus group were asked about the constraints of transparency in the studied school. Fig 7 summarizes the major findings depicted from their answers.

As shown in the figure, one main constraint that was highlighted was the cultural aspect. As one of the respondents stressed, "If we live in a conservative culture, a culture that has special values and tradition, and wants to preserve it, will be less likely to be open to other culture and ideas". Respondent 5 further adds "In this situation, the educational system will be designed based on that context. It is as far I can tell; this school is based on this context". In other words, the communication done in the school is always top -bottom, coming from the management towards the people handling lower tasks; that is, it is all about one channel communication and we have to respect that. So, when the management emails or sends instructions everyone is expected to commit to these instructions and commit to these directions by heart.

These are the main features of a conservative society, you don't negotiate, you accept the commands that are coming from a higher social level, which is exactly what is happening in the educational system."

Other constraints discussed included time constraints and teacher overload. All teachers agreed that the curriculum offered in the school is very dense in which most teachers felt overwhelmed with what they already have and therefore resisted the idea of contributing to anything other than being in class. One of the respondents said, "I think some of the teachers fear to contribute (because of the time restraints) in school improvement, because they feel that if they do it would be additional work, so there should be realistic time plan for improvement, if the management brings a plan it won't be of use if time limits were not taken into consideration."

Another major constraint of transparency was job security. The majority of the respondents agreed that they do not participate in surveys sent on leadership in school as they believe that it is not truly anonymous and thus fear to lose their jobs based on that. Another issue is the lack of trust culture that prevails in the school. Indeed, one responded said, "I don't fill any survey about curriculum or exam because I know whatever I am going to write it will not change anything, so why should I waste my time on something that will not change?".



**Figure 7** Constraints of transparency

#### **4.4.2 Leadership style**

When tackling the topic of school improvement, one cannot neglect the importance of school leadership in steering the wheel towards achieving an effective school enhancement. Another factor that aroused in this study and was pinpointed as the main obstacle towards a positive school improvement was leadership style. As respondent 2 from the focus group stressed, "sometimes it's because of the dictatorship leadership from the management that it is micromanagement, it is not that everyone has a role in helping in school. It is more like a one-man show. Indeed, results from Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) did confirm a negative relationship between the authoritarian leadership style and school improvement results. As a matter of fact, two studies done by Harris (2003) emphasized the connotation of distributed leadership in attaining and sustaining school improvement. Therefore, distributed leadership and involvement of teachers in the decision-making process is

one of the solutions of bridging the gap between school inspection and school improvement.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The final chapter of this study aims to discuss the main findings that were achieved along with suggesting some recommendations to be considered while opening a window for further studies to be conducted.

This study sought to examine the effect of reflective feedback as a moderator between school inspection and school improvement, explore teacher's views on being an efficient asset in the school improvement plan committee, and investigate the role of school leadership in establishing a compatible and supportive work environment to its teachers. The study was profoundly based on mixed methodology research in which four different data collection methods (questionnaire, interview, focus group, and data analysis) were deployed. The respondents included 1 principal, 74 teachers, and 6 HoDs.

### **5.1 Main Findings**

Essentially, the main research question in this study was "Does teachers' reflective feedback on school inspection results moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement?". To answer this question, three different sub-questions were targeted:

#### **1) Will self-reflection on inspection results affect teachers' attitude towards the inspection process?**

To answer this question, views from teachers on their role in the post-inspection process were collected through the open-ended section of the questionnaire along with the discussion questions shared in the focus discussion group. Additionally, the

interview with the principal explored his views on the inspection process in general and the importance of giving and receiving feedback from teachers.

The finding of this study showed that 87.5% of teachers and HoDs believe that reflective feedback will indeed enhance the school improvement process and will improve the teacher's attitude towards inspection and school improvement process as they will have an increased sense of responsibility and ownership to the results. These results coincide with the previous literature which articulates that self-reflection promotes auto-assessment, as well as self-regulation which promotes reflective practice which can be used through their careers (Pajares 1992; Peacock 2001). As a matter of fact, Richards and Lockhart (2013) posited that reflection is an efficient method to positively modify teachers' beliefs. Any obstructive beliefs or paradoxes between beliefs and practices can be removed with appropriate self-reflection on teachers' actions.

However, teachers expressed that this is not currently happening in the investigated school as 55.6% of teachers stated that school inspection results are not openly shared with the staff and 74.3% believe that they are not involved in the decision-making process. Interestingly enough, the finding of this study showed a clear divergence between the views of teachers and HoDs regarding their views on their role in the studied school.

## **2)Does involving teachers in the school improvement planning facilitate reaching the school targets more smoothly?**

Another corner that was intended to be investigated by this study was whether involving teachers in the school improvement planning would facilitate reaching school targets more smoothly. This was chiefly achieved by investigating the current process of school improvement planning and inspecting whether teachers are a core

element in the process. Furthermore, teachers' views on their role in the improvement process were also explored.

Findings of the study showed that although there is a concrete planning method for school improvement in the studied school, which was reflected by the results from the survey that showed a consensus between teachers and HoDs on the reliance of school improvement planning on data-informed decisions, 74.3% of teachers believe that they are not part of the process and that they do not participate in meeting for school improvement. As a matter of fact, the results showed a clear gap between management and teachers' perception on the involvement of the latter in the school improvement planning procedure as most teachers are not aware of their participation in the school improvement process and believe the improvement plan they are doing is extra work and does not relate to the previous inspection results.

However, there was a consensus that school targets and recommendations would be easily implemented by the teachers once the teacher feels their contributions were being valued and plans are created based on the real conditions of the teaching-learning process. Indeed, teachers would easily achieve the targets if they were properly informed, as well as first-hand suggestions and decision would create clarity of implementation of the plan. As a matter of fact, these results were consistent with research findings of NWREL (1994) who acknowledged the strength of involving teachers in the decision-making process as it results in staff empowerment, a heightened sense of shared leadership, increased ownership due to direct involvement, an enhancement in decision implementation due to shared responsibility, as well as providing an opportunity for staff to monitor improvement activities while motivating their peer teachers. However, it is noteworthy to mention that certain restraints stated



by NWREL (1994) of using this model might include the lack of control by the principal and a potentially low outcome even though the process might be good.

### **3)What role does school leadership play to connect between school inspection results and school improvement?**

For this sub research question, an investigation on the current leadership practices that are taking place in the studied campus was done. Moreover, teachers and HoDs' views were collected on recommended practices to be done and that is considered to be efficient in connecting between school inspection results and school improvement.

Results from this study revealed that both teachers and head teachers agreed that there are indeed standard processes and procedures for monitoring and assessing improvement initiatives in their school. Moreover, the respondents were one in expressing that enhancement of ongoing improvements are made possible by the results in monitoring and assessment efforts which is clearly done by the higher management, however, the majority agreed that the key role that leadership can partake is empowering the teachers' role by involving teachers in whole staff meetings in which inspection results are openly shared and feedback is accepted from all parties. Other recommendations included brainstorming sessions with staff and proper assignment of tasks to different people that target the inspection results and aims to improve them. All of which was emphasized by Akert and Martin (2012) who believes that embracing teachers as leaders is a vital step toward success. Martin's research findings which complement the results of this research pinpoints the significance of principals' willingness to utilize distinctive leadership skills in order to endorse "teacher leaders". This is paramount in producing a school culture that fosters teamwork and collegiality between staff members.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were articulated to help in bridging the gap between school inspection and school improvement with the emphasis on the leadership role in achieving that.

### **5.2.1 Creating teacher leaders**

Preparing the next generation of the leadership team is as important as preparing the students for their future. Therefore, creating teacher leaders will build an academic community which is capable of developing strong instructional plans and educational visions. Actions that can lead to an increase in teachers' participation can include a think big – go small approach in which the department leads take suggestions from the subject teachers on how to approach a bigger vision of the system. The academic team can then consolidate the suggestions, screen, and line up the feasible recommendations. Once listed, recommendations can be presented to the department for final decision and then the academic team will verify and approve.

### **5.2.2 A unified post inspection plan**

A defined post inspection plan that could be used connect between school inspection and school improvement should be followed. This can be summarized as follow:

- 1) Involve teachers by making whole school staff meeting and share with them the results of the inspection.
- 2) Pool ideas from teachers and allow them to reflect on the inspection results.
- 3) Allow teachers to set targets that aim at improving the weaknesses in the report.
- 4) Hold them accountable for it.

### **5.2.3 A School improvement committee that involves teachers**

Have a committee from different departments where at least a member from each department would be representing whatever the department thinks, that is, a subcommittee within a committee. In other words, there should be a committee for school improvement which includes these representative teachers who will be the connection between management and the rest of teachers.

### **5.2.4 Building an environment of trust**

Schools can implement a transparent policy to enhance improvement processes, including but not limited to providing detailed feedback on the inspection process; allowing teachers to participate in the decision-making process; involving parents, staff, and teachers in communities of practice, and create a systematic approach of checking the improvement progress per school, department and individual staff. Indeed, the importance of building trust in an educational setting and its importance in producing equity and excellence has been affirmed in the book written by Maele, Houtte, and Forsyth (2014).

## **5.3 Further studies**

Following the finding of this research, further studies on areas such as the following can be useful to achieve a better school improvement

- The need for a defined post inspection model that can be based on the experiences of leading countries in education such as Finland and the UK.
- The need for a defined school improvement planning model that can also be based on the experiences of leading countries in education and that can suit the cultural environment in the UAE.

- The exploration of solutions to obstacles behind the lack of teachers' involvement in decision making.
- Quasi-Experimental research over at least a one academic year period can be done while comparing two samples of schools in which one provides feedback and the other doesn't provide a concrete relation between school inspection and school improvement while moderated by reflective feedback.
- Larger sample of teachers over different areas could be chosen to provide a better generalization of the data.

In light of these findings, and by going back to the main research question it can be concluded that reflective feedback on school inspection results does moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement as teachers do appreciate being part of the decision-making process and feel more accountable in the process. However, this change cannot happen overnight, and it needs steps. We need to change our epistemic behavior and epistemic beliefs because it is deep-rooted into us that as teachers we cannot express our feelings freely. To get rid of this belief it requires time. More importantly, it requires trust between the management and teachers and it requires to work together, that is, collaboration across the system. When teachers are given the opportunity to talk, criticize, and accept criticism in both directions then this is the first stage, a conclusion that had been equally stated by Moller and Pankake (2013).

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## Appendix A

### School Inspection for School Improvement Survey

Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to complete this survey on School inspection and School improvement.

This is a study that aims to explore how school leadership can better utilize inspection results by allowing teachers to reflect on the inspection results and involve them in the school improvement planning process.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study, you can withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationships with your school. You are not required to answer questions, but your participation would be greatly appreciated as your perceptions will provide valuable information.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and [digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Any report of this study will share group results only and will not include your name or other individual information by which you could be identified. If you have questions or would like a copy or summary of this study's results, please contact me on [2016101032@student.buid.ac.ae](mailto:2016101032@student.buid.ac.ae). Completing this survey indicates that you are 18 years of age or older and indicates your consent to participate in the study.

#### \* Required

##### **Do you agree to participate in this survey? \***

- Yes
- No

##### **A. Background Information**

Please answer the following questions by circling your responses or filling the gaps provided

##### **Gender \***

- Female
- Male

##### **Age group \***

- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- Above 60

##### **Highest level of education \***

- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Postgraduate diploma
- Master's degree
- Others

**If others, please specify**

**Current position in your school \***

- Teacher
- Head Teacher

**Department (if applicable)**

- Science
- English
- Arabic
- Engineering
- CS
- Math

**Number of School inspections you have been involved in (as inspector or staff) \***

**Were you part of the last school inspection at the school you are working at? \***

- Yes
- No

**B. Leadership Role in School Improvement**

How true is each of the following statements for you and/or your school? 1= Not true at all, 2= Somewhat True , 3=Mostly True , 4= True , 5 = Very True , 6= Unsure

**1.Data- informed decisions guide the selection of improvement initiatives in my school. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not True at All

Unsure

**2.Improvement efforts across my school are coordinated to optimize efficiencies and minimize redundancies. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

**3.The focus of improvement efforts is on changing systems, policies, and adult practices to better support students, rather than 'fixing' students. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

**4.There are standard processes and procedures for monitoring and assessing improvement initiatives in my school. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

**5.Results from monitoring and assessment efforts are used to inform and enhance ongoing improvement efforts.**

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

### **C. Teachers Involvement in School Improvement and Decision Making**

How true is each of the following statements for you and/or your school? 1= Not true at all , 2= Somewhat True , 3=Mostly True , 4= True , 5 = Very True , 6= Unsure

**6. Inspection Results are openly shared with the staff and opportunities for giving feedback is given \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not True at all

Unsure

**7. I participate in meetings related to decision-making and improvement based on the recommendation of the inspection report \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

**8. My school values and centers perspectives from all members of the learning community in decision making. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not True at all

Unsure

**9. There is planned time and space for staff and families/community members to collaborate for the purpose of decision-making related to improvement of school policies and practices. \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

**10. Teachers are provided with opportunities to choose from PD sessions that are based on the recommendations of school inspection reports \***

1 2 3 4 5 6

Not true at all

Unsure

### **D. Open Ended Questions**

**11. In your opinion, will providing teachers with feedback on school inspection results and involving them in decision making enhance the school improvement process? \***

- Yes
- No

**Justify your answer**

**2. In your opinion, what actions should school leadership take to utilize school inspection results for school improvement? \***

**3. In your opinion, what actions should YOU as a teacher take to utilize inspection results for school improvement? \***

## **Appendix B**

### **Principal Interview Questions**

**General Research Question: Does teachers' reflective feedback on school inspection results moderate the relationship between school inspection and school improvement?**

#### **Research Question 1:**

1. What is the process you follow after receiving the results of your school inspection?
2. Are school inspection results openly shared with teachers in your school? Justify your answer.
3. In your opinion, what are the benefits of taking teachers' feedback on school inspection results.
4. In your opinion, what might be the reasons behind not taking teachers' feedback on school inspection results?

#### **Research Question 2:**

1. Describe the procedure you follow for school improvement planning.
2. In your current school, are teachers involved in the school improvement planning procedure? If no, then why?
3. In your opinion, does involving teachers in the decision-making process lead to achieving school targets and inspection recommendations in a smoother way? Explain your answer

#### **Research Question 3:**

1. What do you think of the term "Teacher leaders" and what do you think is the role of the leadership team in creating teacher leaders?

2. What actions can you take, as a principal, to involve teachers in the decision-making process.

3. In your opinion, what actions can you take to bridge the gap between school inspection results and school improvement?