

# The Malaysian School Inspectorate as an Institution of Quality Assurance in Education through the Framework of Knowles' Process Enneagram

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**Abstract:** This paper uncovers School Inspection as the central measure of quality improvement of education in Malaysia. Undeniably, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has posed greater demand for quality assurance and monitoring as well as organizational efficiency and accountability. Consequently, the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools and Quality Assurance which is also known as *Jemaah Nazir Dan Jaminan Kualiti (JNJK, hereafter)* is required to be well equipped with the knowledge, skills and also the current concern in education to ensure that a high standard of quality education is achieved and maintained in schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the current practices of school inspection towards leadership performance in the context of Knowles' Process Enneagram ©. The study employed a qualitative research design involving respondents from the top management of *JNJK* in Sabah, Malaysia. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a Self-Organizing Leadership model known as the Process Enneagram developed by Richard N. Knowles (2002) to gain an in-depth understanding of the uniqueness of the leadership practices manifested by the *JNJK*. The Process Enneagram © is a tool used to identify characteristics and traits shaping the organizational performance and it has been successfully used in many Western countries. The findings of these qualitative data are characterized into various domains based on Knowles' framework which see the operation of an organization falling into nine major attributes. The study identified various categories shaping the work of school inspectors, namely The Guardian of Standard Quality in Education (Self-Identification), Evaluation and Data Collection (Fulfillment of Purpose & Role), Standardized Operation Procedure (Self-Organization), Adherence (Self-Principles), Policy Implementations (Result-Oriented), Sufficient Guidelines (Improvement-Oriented), Research-based Approach (Reliability of Methods), Feedback and Guidance (Self-Connection) and Communication and Competence (Challenge-Driven). The findings of this study further indicated that the cycles of work undertaken by school inspectors creates the value for the organization (*JNJK*) as well as successive inspection cycles. This is in tandem to the *JNJK's* obligation and aspiration to promote improvement through school inspection which specifically targets the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management as well as the overall educational standards across the Malaysian education system.

**Keywords:** Leadership Performance, Knowles' Process Enneagram©, School Inspection.

## 1. Introduction

In the Malaysian education context, *Jemaah Nazir Dan Jaminan Kualiti (JNJK* hereafter) was established through the Education ACT 1996 Part X: The Inspectorate of Schools Chapter 1 and 2 (Laws of Malaysia Act 550) to ensure that an adequate standard of teaching is developed and maintained in educational institutions. Henceforth, the practice of school inspection is conducted by the Malaysian School of Inspectorate (*JNJK*) under the wing of the Ministry of Education (MOE hereafter). The structure of school evaluation in Malaysia is derived from the school audit undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England where school inspectors are responsible to evaluate and report on the quality and standards of education, management and leadership of schools. Inspection is seen to offer a set of valuable assessments with regards to the current condition of the quality, strengths and weaknesses of schools. Learmonth (2000) pointed out that “we have the responsibility to provide all children with the best possible education and school inspection is an important source of information about how successfully this aim is being achieved”.

Technically, school inspection is part of the decision-making process in education where it involves evaluation of the performance of schools through systematically collecting and analyzing information and relating this to explicit objectives, criteria and values (Ofsted, 2012). In Malaysia, the practice of school inspection involves an external assessment that covers all aspects of a school and their impact on student learning. This comprehensive analysis and review covers a wide aspect of data, inputs, processes and outcomes. The data and information collected will provide a clear picture with regards to various elements such as the quality of leadership and management, learning and teaching activities, infrastructure and physical resources, curriculum resources and the standards of student achievement. Essentially, school inspection aims to inspect and present to the ministry, the school and stakeholders a detailed report on the schools’ overall performance, and suggest precise recommendations for further development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Human Relations Theory

In the 1930s, Elton Mayo theorized on the importance of meeting the social needs of employees to increase productivity (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Human Relations Theory studied workers’ behavior in organization and employee satisfaction on productivity. It was theorized that if people are well motivated and satisfied, they will naturally be committed to their work and can be trained to be self-directed and creative at work. This theory further proposed that employees should be actively involved during the decision making process (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Therefore, recognitions are essential in improving employees’ productivity (Druker, 1995; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Hence, with regards to significantly enhancing school inspectors’ productivity and quality, their knowledge and experience should be duly considered (Druker, 1991).

In the practice of school inspection, inspectors are the best people to know their weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, they should be treated as humans and not merely as packages of resource. Thus, school inspectors need to be able to support each other in assuming the roles as facilitators in order to improve teachers’ job satisfaction (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Sergiovanni & Starratt (2007) assumes that policy making in school inspection which aims to raise the quality of education requires both inspectors and teachers to be actively involved in the process of evaluation in order to create the significant improvement in school achievement.

In addition, Human Relations Theory also supported quality development of education in schools whereby it has been cited to provide guidance to school inspectors in communicating effectively with teachers and they are regarded as a whole person rather than as packages of energy, skills and aptitudes to be utilized by administrators and school inspectors. This implies that school inspectors need to develop a feeling of satisfaction among teachers by creating interest in them as important persons and encourage intrinsic motivation so that teachers can have a feeling of personal enjoyment, interest and pleasure at work (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; 2007).

## **2.2 Critical Theory**

Critical Theory was introduced by Habermas, a socio-political analyst in Frankfurt school in the 1980's (Tripp, 1992). The Critical Theory originated from the philosophical approach which identifies the idea of the established knowledge. It is also conceived that this established knowledge has its own philosophical entity based on ontological as well as epistemological backgrounds. Bryman (2004) believed that philosophical orientation is the prominent way of building adequate knowledge. According to Bryman (2004), the epistemological approach is utilized in the study of social phenomena and considers people to be value free. Since objectivism assumes an organization as a solid object with sets of mechanism, regulation and parameters to get the work done, hence, Critical Theory assumes that human beings be seen as individuals with their own unique feelings (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, 2007). Essentially, Critical theory conveyed the significance of human self-awareness, consciousness and recognition of problems (Tripp, 1992).

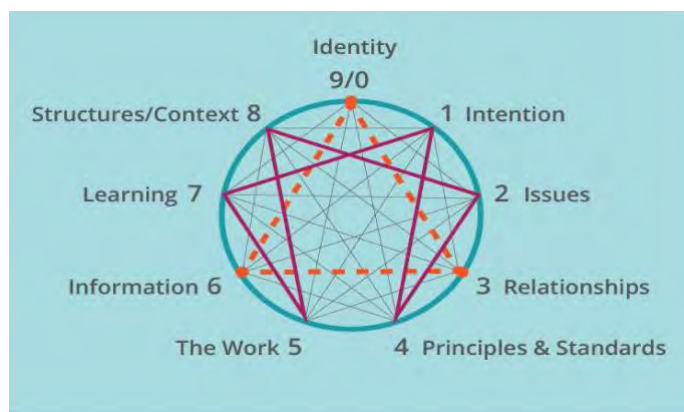
In the domain of school inspection, inspectors, teachers and school leaders need to be seen as human with total awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and also freedom. The vital role of school inspectors is to help ease the process of teaching and learning, encourage teachers in reflecting on their own performance as well as providing relevant solutions in overcoming teaching and leadership difficulties (Tripp,1992; Drukker, 1991). According to Leew (2002), this type of relationship between school inspectors and teachers creates a positive ground for overall school improvement. Drukker (1991) argues that Critical theory in school inspection aims to respect teachers and school leaders' values by not trying to impose on solutions. This is seen as a vital determinant to allow for creativity which in turn will elevate students' performances.

## **2.3 School Inspection through the Perspective of Knowles' Process Enneagram ©**

Various perspectives of effective leadership activities in an organization emerged throughout the centuries and some perspectives such as transformational leadership were held dominant by many educators (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001). Researchers strived to identify characteristics and traits that help shape leadership behaviour in an organization which in turn could affect other people within as well as outside the organization (Yuki, 1999). Hench (2003) specified that organizational performance is closely related to self-organizing leadership whereby the focus has shifted to leadership and challenges of management. In specific, the challenge has evolved from that of managing and manipulating things to that of living and working effectively in relation with one another (Hench, 2003). Pertinent question prevails of whether or not the current practice and conduct of school inspection in Malaysia is conducted based on the leadership characteristics and traits ? And does it contribute in shaping effective school leaders in Malaysian schools? The answers lie deep within the organization which needed to be seriously looked into with scientific investigation.

Knowles (2002) specified that in order for Self-Organizing Leadership to gain the most favorable ground for their actions or practices, the people in the organization need to be "in-relationship". This according to him is due to the fact that these people are actually living and working in a "living system" rather than in a "machine system" as seen in common and classic organization. The leaders who opted for Self-Organizing Leadership tend to engage people in positive ways due to the practice of top-down leaders.

Knowles (2002) further expressed that leadership be looked as a series of activities and therefore it needs to be examined with a framework consisting of various activity components as illustrated in Figure 1. Essentially, the Process Enneagram © (Knowles, 2002) serves as a profound guide as it describes activities and enables one to spot what has happened and what is presently happening. This is important for school inspectors as it looks at the organization from nine varying features at work.



**Fig 1.** The framework of Knowles (2002) Process Enneagram ©

For the purpose of this current study, understanding all the nine perspectives of the Process Enneagram © will help school inspectors as well as school leaders to have deeper insights into the way the inspectorate organization functions as living systems which constantly interacts and adapts to changes in their circle and environment in order to maintain their identity, sustainability and the relevance in the system of education. This framework shows the patterns of how an organization works and recommends relevant guidance to specific sequences on how a team can best work together on a long-term basis. Table 1 below shows the nine perspectives based on the relevant guided questions.

**Table 1** Questions based on Knowles (2002) Process Enneagram

POINT	PERSPECTIVES	QUESTIONS
Point 0	Identity	1. Who are they? 2. What is their identity? (As the first cycle is completed, this point becomes point 9)
Point 1	Intention	1. What are they trying to do? 2. What are their intentions? 3. What is the future potential?
Point 2	Issues	1. What are the problems and issues facing them? 2. What are their dilemmas, paradoxes and questions?
Point 3	Relationship	1. What are their relationships like? 2. How are they connected to others they need in the system? 3. What is the quality of these connections? 4. Are there too many or too few of them?
Point 4	Principles and Standards	1. What are their principles and standards of behaviour? 2. What are their ground rules? 3. What are the undiscussable behaviours that go on over and over?
Point 5	Work	1. What is their work? 2. On what basis are they physically working?
Point 6	Information	1. Do the people know what's going on? 2. How do they create and handle information?
Point 7	Learning	1. Are they learning anything? 2. What are their learning processes? 3. What is the future potential?
Point 8	Structure and Context	1. How are they organized? 2. What is their structure? 3. Where does the energy come from that makes things happen in their organization? 4. Is their hierarchy deep or flat?

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		5. What's happening in the larger environment in which they are living and trying to thrive?
		6. Who are their competitors and what are they doing?
		7. What is the context or surrounding environment in which they are living and working?
Point 9	Their New Identity	1. As they have moved through these questions, how has their identity changed?
		2. Have they expanded and grown?
		3. What new things do they know?
		4. What new skills do they now have?

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In Malaysia, the introduction of a systematic and comprehensive mechanism in the form of the Standards for Quality Education in Malaysian Schools (*SKPM*, hereafter) by the *JNJK* was seen to be timely and appropriate. *SKPM* is widely utilized by the *JNJK* and other departments in the Ministry of Education (MOE) to inspect and evaluate schools. Schools, on the other hand, employed *SKPM* as the instrument for School Self Evaluation (SSE) to identify their strengths, weaknesses and issues in order to identify the actions for further improvement.

Plowright (2008) mentioned that the Effective School Model as adopted in *SKPM* adheres to a systematic and structured form of evaluation which relies on a range of evidence gathered from all the stakeholders concerned within the schools. Hofman et al, (2009) reported that the model involves a cycle of various activities such as assisting leaders and teachers to set the schools' direction, planning, evaluating and also identifying various improvement steps.

Indeed, the greatest challenge in Malaysia is related to the issues of school leadership, teacher effectiveness and students' performance in the classrooms. For example, in terms of school leadership, some of the school leaders are experiencing challenges in executing their roles in planning, organizing, leading and controlling especially when they have lack of experience. Thus, the formulation of sound national level policies does not mean much, if the policies and strategies are not being properly implemented and carefully monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. The challenges and issues highlighted above will not be easy to be tackled as it involves a culture of change with different attitudes and incentive structures. This transformative process will take time to empower school leaders, strengthen the school management, along with the renewed focus on developing and recruiting effective teachers to provide relevant information regarding the effectiveness of the current practices of school evaluation.

Pertinent to the above scenario, the purpose of the present study is to examine the current practice of school inspection towards leadership performance by utilizing Knowles' Process Enneagram © to identify the cycle of 'living system' in the organization. On the other hand, this study will also strive to determine *JNJK's* conformity and compliance to the established leadership behavior and activities in the Process Enneagram ©.

### 3. Method

During the beginning analysis phase, the data has gone through preliminary data cleaning to determine errors (Aziz, Seman, Hashim, Roslin, & Ishar, 2019). This research employed a qualitative approach using interview as a technique to distinguish practices and experiences of school inspectors from three *JNJK's* offices located in Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Sandakan of Sabah. The interview data were collected from three school inspectors who were also the heads of the respective *JNJK* offices mentioned above which were coded as School Inspector 1 (SI 1), School Inspector 2 (SI 2) and School Inspector 3 (SI 3). Participants were required to provide their responses to the open-ended interview questions with regards to the conduct of school inspection in the context of Knowles' Process Enneagram © (2002). Permission to use the Process Enneagram © was obtained from Richard N. Knowles prior to data collection. Qualitative approach was employed to increase credibility and validity of the results as it can potentially explore deeply into the central phenomenon of the study. Cresswell (2012) stated that "qualitative research lies more on the views of participants in the study and less on



the direction identified in the literature” (pp. 16-17). Hence, it is hoped that these participants will provide essential data that can be used for the betterment of leadership quality in Malaysian schools.

Detailed analysis of the information was conducted using The Process Enneagram © to map the numerous patterns and processes of work interaction of school inspectors. Open coding was applied to determine concepts and properties leading to the discovery of categorized variables based on similarities and differences on the themes emerged from the analysis. Subsequently, the Process Enneagram was employed to identify emerging themes and domains. The coding of qualitative data using the framework and research question has allowed the coding of concepts and themes to emerge deductively. The reassembling data using axial coding was conducted to map the relationship between categories and subcategories. When main ideas started to emerge, they were illustrated into different categories and subcategories based on the nine points of the Process Enneagram ©. The findings were then profiled into domains and related categories based on Knowles’ framework which sees the operation of the organization falling into nine major attributes forming the ‘living system’ of the *JNJK*.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, one of the aims of this study is to examine the current practices of school inspection in the context of Knowles’ Process Enneagram ©. The qualitative data have been distinguished into nine domains following the analysis based on the framework of the Process Enneagram. The qualitative data were categorized into category and sub-category in accordance with relevant literature and the code of ethics upheld by the *JNJK*.

The Process Enneagram © strived to identify characteristics and traits that help shape leadership behaviour in an organization which in turn could affect other people inside and outside of an organization (Yuki, 1999). Knowles (2002) specified that in order for Self-Organizing Leadership to gain the most favorable ground for their actions or practices, the people in the organization need to be in-relationship. This according to him is due to the fact that these people are actually living and working in a “living system” rather than in a “machine system” as seen in common and classic organization.

The current study has successfully identified various domains and categories shaping the work of school inspectors as shown in Table 2, namely The Guardian of Standard Quality in Education (Self-Identification), Evaluation and Data Collection (Fulfillment of Purpose & Role), Standardized Operation Procedure (Self-Organization), Adherence (Self-Principles), Policy Implementations (Result-Oriented), Sufficient Guidelines (Improvement-Oriented), Research-based Approach (Reliability of Methods), Feedback and Guidance (Self-Connection) and Communication and Competence (Challenge-Driven).

**Table 2.** Domains, Categories and Subcategories of Practices of School Inspection

	Domain	Category	Sub-Category
1	Identity	Self-Identification	Guardian of the Education Standard Quality
2	Purpose & Intention	Fulfillment of Purpose & Role	Evaluation and data collection
3	Structure & Organization Pattern	Self-Organization	Standardized Operation Procedures
4	Principles & Standard	Self-Principles	Adherence
5	Potential & Results	Result-Oriented	Policy Implementation
6	Accomplishment	Improvement-Oriented	Sufficient Guidelines
7	Access & Process of Information	Reliability of Methods & Approaches	Research-based Approach
8	Quality of Connection	Self-Connection	Feedback and Guidance
9	Issues	Challenge-Driven	Communication and Competence

#### 4.1 Self-Identification: The Guardian of Standard Quality in Education

Learmonth (2000) claimed that school inspection is both a tool for accountability and as a powerful force for school improvements. Investigation into qualitative data revealed that school inspectors are aware of their role to continuously monitor as well as provide support and guidance for the pupils' progress and attainment. School inspectors realized that the core business is to inspect schools to ensure that teachers are doing their job and thus the pupils' learning needs are attended to. SI 1 has suggested that: "...school inspection held by appointed school inspectors (*JNJK*) generally able to assist schools and leaders to run the school operation in an organized way and smooth manner...". SI 3 has agreed by adding: "...But in reality, we are the quality keeper of the standard of education in Malaysia. We keep schools in line with the current policies of the MOE and make sure that schools implement initiatives to support each different policies". This was further confirmed by SI 2: "Basically the identity of school inspectors conforms with the responsibility to guard the standard of Malaysian education system with no fear and favour". Accordingly, this corresponds well with the *JNJK*'s major contribution to the Malaysian education system in providing guidance for school leaders to manage educational provision in schools.

It was also pointed out that successful inspection relied heavily on the truthfulness of findings and the willingness of the school to improve and move forward. This was put forth by SI 2 as he stressed: "The findings and reports prior to school inspection resulted in improvement and better management in the various aspects and stages of school operations. But most importantly is that the outcome of an inspection would provide indication to school leaders and heads as to how to better manage the whole operation of the school". This is reflected in the raising of schools' overall standards whereby the proportion of pupils' improvement through the National Literacy and Numeracy Initiative (*LINUS*) has risen steadily over the years due to the guidance and support given by the *JNJK*. In addition, Malaysian students' attainment in international assessment such as TIMMS and PISA has significantly showcased promising improvement. However, there is no guarantee of school improvement following each inspection unless appropriate follow up is taken by the school. Therefore, it is crucial for school inspectors to come to the term that school improvement preceding inspection involves a complex process which demands commitment, energy and time. On top of that, appropriate feedback and follow-up measures need to be taken after the inspection in order to maintain the momentum of school improvement. This is further justified by Ehren and Vissher (2006) in affirming that schools are inspected to elevate the quality of schools and education system. Hence, it is of great importance for school inspectors to be consciously aware that it is the teachers and school leaders who can improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools and not the inspectors.

#### 4.2 Fulfillment of Purpose & Role: Evaluation and Data Collection

School inspectors identified the pattern of job fulfillment in the general practice of school inspection. SI 3 highlighted that: "an internal memo will be issued by the Malaysian Chief Inspector ordering such type of inspection to be conducted in schools by school inspectors. So this is the basic standard of operation in conducting school inspections. I would say that every specific type of inspection being conducted thus far by the *JNJK* has been meeting its purpose as we managed to extract not only the required information but also figures and data needed by the ministry". Similarly, SI 1 further stated that: "School inspections cover many purposes, but the main basic purpose is to ensure that schools are in compliance with the government or MOE current policies or initiatives. Any nonconformities will need to be realigned with *JNJK* suggesting measures to be taken by the inspected school".

According to Dederling and Mueller (2010), school inspection is concerned with evaluative and systematic assessment based on standardized criteria. School inspectors affirmed that one of the main contributions of the *JNJK* to the Malaysian education system is the dissemination and publication of *SKPM* which featured the inspection framework and tools which aimed to assist schools in self-assessing their current operational quality and condition.

Hence, the instrument and tool provide the quality standards with regards to the core operations in schools and also offers the benchmarks to be adopted as a resource of internal review for Malaysian

schools. This provides the element of transparency as the widely shared framework of inspection that will indicate in advance how the judgment of inspection can be formed. Findings also noted that the school inspection framework has been revised on a regular basis to cater for current needs and development in the Malaysian educational system. SI 2 noted that: “.....JNJK has been closely providing information, support and guiding school leaders towards demonstrating best practices in instructional leadership extensively for the past two years”.

Over the years, *SKPM* continues to provide important guidance for school inspection. Hence, *SKPM* has been highly regarded by stakeholders who use it as an instrument for School Self-Assessment. Data on school inspection has shown a great majority of inspected schools demonstrated sufficient improvement since their previous inspection. To date, the school inspection is reliable and consistent as the enquiry is made based on the practices of seeking evidence from multiple sources of information and data, strict guidelines of the inspection framework and most of the school inspectors were making judgments in accordance with the existing evidence.

### 4.3 Self-Organization: Standardized Operation Procedure

The findings of this study also implied that the meticulous cycles of work undertaken by school inspectors have created the value of the organization (*JNJK*) as well as successive inspection cycles.

“Of course in conducting the school inspection, school inspectors are required to adhere to various procedures as the standardized operation procedure. These procedures include taking precaution during various timelines such as before, during and after every inspection. Let me just highlight some standardized practices adopted during inspection which involved the examination of documents, data collection, interview session, checklist as well as survey. All these comprehensive methods of data collection has provided a fair and clear picture of the current condition and progress of a school.” (SI 2)

It was also put forth by SI 1 that:

“Every inspection held by *JNJK* is based on a specific theme or objective which is in line with the current initiative or requirement by the MOE. Through this way, relevant information on the implementation process can be gathered and reported to the Minister. (SI 1)

However, SI 3 has voiced his concern with regards to school leaders’ negative perceptions on the tool used in school inspection:

“If I may mention here, it was a bit saddening that some school leaders looked at the recent development of the *SKPM* as an extra burden to their already very hectic schedule. Why couldn’t they see it as a useful manual on how to manage their schools effectively? Why couldn’t they see the fact that *JNJK* is continuously trying to help the school and share the use of inspection instruments? Have school inspectors not been clear and ‘transparency’ enough to stakeholders?”. (SI 3)

In essence, school inspectors have suggested that the current practice of school inspection is in tandem with the *JNJK*’s obligation and aspiration to promote improvement through school inspection which specifically targets on the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management as well the overall educational standards across the Malaysian education system. On the same note, school inspections are secured by rigid quality assurance measures where various cycles of quality management procedures need to be followed before, during and after each inspection. Dederling and Mueller (2010) pointed out that the tool utilized in school inspection consisted of objective and data-based evaluation. Suffice to note that the practice of school inspection ensures that inspectors’ judgments tally with the evidence. The requirement for inspectors to present findings will enable



schools to ensure the accuracy of the reports before they are put in the written form and sent to stakeholders.

#### 4.4 Self-Principles: Adherence

Overall, school Inspectors agreed on the existence of the elements of adherence and commitment amongst themselves in Malaysia.

“It is our duty to make sure that each and every aspect of the assessment in the Standard 4 is being strictly followed and compiled throughout the whole teaching and learning process. To be specific, it is pertinent that all the five vital roles of a teacher and one role of students are followed for an active & meaningful learning to take place in classrooms.” (SI 3)

“Furthermore, SKPM has served *JNJK* as an instrument or tool to assess how far a school leader has met the specified Critical Criteria stated. It has been so comprehensive to guide school leaders on what needs to be done as well as how it is supposed to be done”. (SI 2)

On that account, the MOE has closely monitored not only the practice of school inspection by the *JNJK* but also the competence of school inspectors and quality of reporting as well. As highlighted by Ofsted (2004), school inspection is a decision making process involving professional evaluation through a systematic data collection and analysis based on explicit objectives and criteria. Henceforth, the conduct of monitoring has set out the quality standards of which every school inspector needs to comply with and has become one of the most important mechanisms for higher quality of school inspection. This has placed a sustainable impact on the accurate checking and tracking of the implementation of MOE’s policies, initiatives and interventions nationwide.

#### 4.5 Result-Oriented: Policy Implementations

School inspectors manifested agreement on the significant impact of the practice of school inspection in the Malaysian education system as a whole.

“The school inspection conducted by *JNJK* provides great assistance to the whole district in terms of consistency and standardized practices among all stakeholders. It is our duty to ensure that the policies of the MOE are being understood and implemented in all schools regardless of their locations. As the guidance of Malaysian Standard of Education, we also strive to ensure that all schools are at par with the implementations of recent educational policies to produce higher qualities of students’ outcome”. (SI 1)

It goes without saying, through school inspections the progress or implementation of government policy initiatives are being inspected and reported to the Ministry. Past studies have shown that school inspection contributed greatly to the quality of school performance and leadership (Sammons, 2006). Following the conduct of school inspection, *JNJK* will provide the MOE information for the development of policies, and produce influential reports and suggestions on educational issues nationwide of which have impacted powerful influence on the educational system and policy development. At the end, the data and evidence gathered through school inspections were used to form a national report to the MOE, catering to the requirement for public accountability as well as promoting relevant changes.

#### 4.6 Improvement-Oriented: Sufficient Guidelines

Ideally, school Inspectors should provide critical insights into leadership aspects, quality of teaching and learning as well as other operational aspects in schools. Hence, Ehren & Visscher (2008) noted that schools are obliged to set an action plan based on inspection findings and recommendations to upgrade leadership, management and instructional aspects. Sharing similar opinion SI 2 and SI 3 have added that:

“Definitely yes because each inspection regardless of the types and objectives, will and always provide sufficient guidance and necessary measures especially for school leaders on how to best run or manage their organization effectively. The use of *SKPMg2* provides substantial guidelines for school leaders to control and run the operation of school in every standard and this in a way that will enhance instructional leadership. Findings and reports of a school inspection will highlight the weaknesses of a school and suggest ways for further improvements”. (SI 2)

“This is because the aim of each and every inspection is to provide guidance so that every aspect of management in schools will follow the correct route and adhere to the MOE’s requirement. This is already stated clearly in the 118 Education Act”. (SI 3)

“We see that the practice of school inspection provides support and guidelines for school heads and leaders to sharpen their leadership skills in order to support instructional operations in schools. The Standard 1 and 2 of our latest revised instrument *SKPMg2* has provided comprehensive guidelines for leaders to manage every aspect supporting instructional leadership qualities in schools”. (SI 1)

On a different perspective, one of the school inspectors mentioned his concern over the issue of re-aligning the operational procedures amongst *MOE*’s stakeholders in order to sustain the positive impact of school inspection. Thus, SI 2 emphasized that:

“*JNJK* has prepared a specific instrument and SOP to guide the schools towards improvement. Nevertheless, not all officers from the *JPN* and *PPD* are familiar with the instrument. This has created problems in schools where they have to cater for the somehow differing requirements posed by *JNJK* and *JPN* even though *JNJK* standard operational procedure is strictly based on the instrument of *SKPMg2*. And apparently, officers from other departments came out with their own simplified version of the instrument based on their own understanding. And this is not right! In fact, *JNJK* needs to be consulted on any of the instruments produced by the *JPN* or *PPD* before they are being used in schools”. (SI 2)

Nonetheless, findings and reports by *JNJK* can be linked at the policy level as well as professional development level. Through inspection, *JNJK* has provided reports and overviews of the strengths and weaknesses to enable schools to see their actual performance and progress. These reports of *JNJK* will clearly signify priorities for the purpose of future improvement to raise the standard of education. The observation of teaching and learning in classrooms in particular is one of the primary obligations to witness how pupils’ learning is operationalized. This does not necessarily mean that school inspectors know better than teachers, but it is through the solid process of sharing and discussion that problems can be identified and solved at the workplace.

#### 4.7 Reliability of Methods: Research-based Approach

It was agreed by school inspectors that the practice of school inspection has provided clear, fair, accurate and timely assessments. Rigorous inspection methodologies are adopted so that sound practice of inspection is maintained. Quality assessments are strictly based on data gathered through

multiple methods such as questionnaires, interviews, lesson observation and document analysis, all of which will be compiled into a final report to be delivered to schools and educational authorities. SI 1 and SI 2 emphasized that:

“The gathering of information involves massive data consisting of quantitative and qualitative data. Data of inspection will be discussed by the panels before finalization. We utilize a very comprehensive data-gathering instrument and schools’ inspector is strictly guided by specific *modus operandi*. Indeed, the task of inspecting school is properly guided and objective-oriented.” (SI 1)

“In a bigger picture, school inspection aims to ensure that every inspection continues to make an important contribution for the efficiency and effectiveness of an educational reform. *JNJK* also aims to ensure that every inspection focuses on generating improvement in terms of school management and students’ outcome.” (SI 2)

Substantially, a high degree of quality procedures in school inspections further assured the consistency of purpose and results. The practice of using researched-based approaches and the triangulation of findings have increased the reliability and validity of judgments made (Ofsted, 2004). It was also highlighted that the practice of school inspection requires that the findings or results be written in a formal report to be sent to a wide range of stakeholders such as the inspected school, District Education Office, State Education Office and *JNJK*’s Head Office. The report is expected to provide clear, accurate and fair evaluation of the effectiveness of the school being inspected. Obviously, this methodology of evaluation seeks to bring along inspection and research approaches in order to identify problematic areas and suggest ways of improvements.

#### 4.8 Self-Connection: Feedback and Guidance

Undeniably, it has been a mutual consent that school inspection contributes to school improvement. Accurate and sufficient feedback from the school inspection has improved various aspects of leadership, organizational management, facilities and students’ affairs management.

“Apart from gathering data as I have mentioned before, my main focus is geared towards providing guidance as to how further improvement can take place after the inspection. We believe that ‘Inspection for Improvement’ will positively help to change the schools by identifying the barriers for continuous improvement”. (SI 3)

“The implementation of major educational reform and programmes as stipulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015 requires that various programmes and initiatives be implemented effectively in schools. Some examples are the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills, KSSR/KSSM, Integration of ICT and STEM. The duty of school inspectors is to ensure appropriate implementation of these initiatives taking place in schools”. (SI 1)

The evaluation of Standard 1 is very relevant as it highlights the work processes needed to be done by school leaders and the various roles they need to perform in schools. The criteria of evaluation or aspects provides a very comprehensive guideline to school leaders on the actions needed to be taken.... They have to positively see the instrument in Standard 1 as a manual helping them towards effective management....”. (SI 2)

Hence, it can be deduced that school inspectors are aware of their roles to facilitate curriculum, initiatives and policy implementations in the Malaysian schools. School inspectors noted that it is their responsibility to provide accurate feedback to the schools as this will pave the way towards school improvement. They further noted that the prime concern of a school inspector is to provide guidance and professional support and not mere criticism to schools. Chapman (2001) stated that in order for the

feedback to have impact on teaching improvement, school inspectors need to be able to effectively communicate areas of improvement and offer attainable solutions to address the problems in school.

#### 4.9 Challenge-Driven: Communication and Competence

To date, school inspections in Malaysia are conducted by the *JNJK*'s experienced inspectors who have relevant qualifications, experience and expertise on subject matters. This has been supported by Ofsted (2004) who argued that inspection must be rigorous and reliable to be of value. Therefore, school inspectors should realize the challenging task of school inspection. SI 1 stated that: "the challenge is to create beneficial relationships through the process of giving feedback based on factual findings and to further strengthen it during the process by giving the much needed guidance to the school". Similar insight is shared by SI 3: "Nowadays, school inspectors have to be well-trained in terms of utilizing good communication skills to ensure mutual understanding and positive outcome of the inspection".

This further implies that schools, leaders, teachers, students and parents need to be well-informed for a school inspection to be beneficial to the school. To achieve better acceptance and influence on the practice, professional and effective communication style must be adopted by the school inspectors. This is to facilitate and support smooth implementation of curriculum initiatives.

"We need stakeholders to understand how we work in order for us to gain trust. You see, trust is an important element that *JNJK* needs to build so that whatever findings or reports made will be accepted openly and not be associated with negative perception or bias. The public and stakeholders need to know that the work of school inspectors involves collecting and studying many ranges of evidence in a very systematic way. We adopt a research-based approach where evidence is gathered, analyzed and triangulated by other approaches such as interviews and document analysis to retain the reliability and validity of findings or judgments". (SI 1)

In Malaysia, the selection and appointment of school inspectors follow a very rigid and thorough process. School inspections are conducted by well-trained inspectors who must possess relevant qualifications as well as experience and subject-matter knowledge on matters being inspected. All licensed inspectors are appropriately trained to use *SKPM* as the inspection instrument to justify evidence gathered and to form accurate judgments. Inspectors are also required to undertake specific training on how to conduct themselves and how to provide oral and written feedback as well as findings. Post selection of school inspectors would include attachment to senior inspectors to undergo specialized field training and a requirement to pass the school-inspectorate examination before licenses are awarded to them. All these stringent measures are to ensure only highly motivated and challenge-driven individuals will be chosen to perform the demanding tasks of inspecting schools.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study has provided an insight that school inspection is a strong and influential tool for the governance of quality education. Investigation into the qualitative data signified the evidence of school inspectors' compliance to the statutory obligation and the *JNJK*'s overall aspiration to promote the improvement of school inspection. The Education Act 1996 stipulates the responsibility of the Chief Inspector to ensure that an adequate standard of teaching is developed and maintained in educational institutions. The Process Enneagram simultaneously provides the necessary order to ensure the organization's smooth operation and offers an alternative guide for school inspectors to conduct school inspection. Conversely, the utilization of the Process Enneagram © has captured the elements of inadequacy which may interrupt the process of school inspection if not tackled appropriately. This is due to the lack of communication and shared information between *JNJK* and educational stakeholders such as the District Education Officers and State Education Officers. The Process Enneagram© has enabled the researchers to identify the weaknesses of the existing instruments and tools used for school improvement by the *JNJK*. Therefore, the *JNJK* has to thoroughly review the nature, purpose, structure,

function as well as operation of the current conduct of School Inspection for the mechanism to be further revamped and reinforced by bridging the existing information gap. With thorough explorations and interactions of the various points encompassed in the Process Enneagram ©, the conduct and practice of school inspection in Malaysia can be further enhanced to meet the current challenges of school inspection in Malaysia.

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