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# Influence of Secondary School Inspection on Lesson Planning in Western Uganda

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## Abstract

School inspection is one of the leading factors in attaining better pedagogy including lesson planning. To that end, any attempt to improve the quality of lesson planning should be given the attention it deserves. This paper, therefore, examines how and to what extent inspection influences teachers' lesson planning in secondary schools in Western Uganda. A concurrent triangulation mixed methods research design involving questionnaire survey and interview, with a total of 399 participants in the categories of school inspectors, teachers, head teachers, and deputy headteachers from 36 secondary school in Western Uganda, was adopted. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, ratios and Linear Regression Analysis while qualitative data were analysed using Qualitative Content Analysis. The study revealed that inspection did not significantly influence lesson planning in secondary schools. The study concluded that inspection has not contributed to improving lesson planning in secondary schools in Uganda. The research advances theory on inspection by demonstrating that merely visiting schools to conduct inspections does not necessarily lead to improvement in lesson planning. Improvement rather hinges on the ways that inspectors communicate, with teachers, prior, during and after the inspection. Understanding teachers' beliefs, practices, and perceptions is important for improving educational processes.

**Keywords:** Inspection, lesson planning, secondary schools, Uganda

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## 1. Introduction

Research evidence shows that lesson planning is a professional practice that is at the heart of effective teaching (Dorgu, 2016; Lika, 2017; Nesari & Heidari, 2014). For example, Dorgu (2016) stated that lesson planning leads to more learning since the teacher has reflected on what needs to be done to bring about desired changes in the learners. Nesari and Heidari (2014) observed that teachers should not go to class without a lesson plan since it is a pre-requisite for effective teaching. According to Lika (2017), lesson planning helps in aligning teaching with curriculum goals and objectives; ensuring that every learner's needs are met with confidence.

In Ugandan secondary schools, however, most teachers are apparently teaching with sketchy and outdated schemes of work and lesson notes, and no lesson plans despite the massive investments in and restructuring of the school inspection system in Uganda to ensure quality of teaching and learning. These practices are reflected in the predominant use of teacher-centred methods (Education Standards Agency, 2003; Lugujjo, 2008; Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), 2007; Winkler, Sondergaard, Nannyonjo, Habyarimana, & Shkaratan, 2008) in addition to assessment results not being used to help learners progress (Directorate of Education Standards, 2008a, 2008b, 2011) and lack of adherence to the national curriculum (Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), 2012; UNEB, 2014).

The problem of poor lesson planning reflects the inadequacy of the Ugandan education system. This scenario raises the question as to whether the apparent problems with lesson planning could be attributed to inspection. While evidence for the influence of inspection on school performance has been established, there is a dearth of studies on the influence of inspection on lesson planning. Even so other studies have posted mixed and contradictory results (Lee, Ding, & Song, 2008; Perryman, 2010; Ventura, 2007). The objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine how secondary school inspection influences teachers' lesson planning in Western Uganda. To achieve this objective, the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant influence of secondary school inspection on lesson planning in western Uganda was tested.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Theoretical Review

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) postulates that: "actors in society seek to reach a common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals." (Habermas, 1984:86). The theory emphasizes widespread participation by all stakeholders and reaching consensus on the plan of action through stakeholder dialogue without

exercise of power (Han, 2002; Mitrović, 1999; Salleh & Tan, 2008; Terry, 1997). This does not mean that strategic action and power differentials are absent, but rather that communicative coordination is the core of communities and societies, and should be deliberately pursued. As applied to this study, TCA holds that inspectors can only be considered as change agents when their interactions with teachers are coordinated through a medium of language and discourse on a plan of action for improvement, thereby modifying the way teachers think and act. In this way, the theory makes a contribution to a better understanding of how inspection works to induce change in schools.

## 2.2. *Inspection and Lesson Planning in Educational Institutions*

Inspection is considered as an important element in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of any education system (Fergusson, 1998; Govinda & Tapan, 1999). Despite the perceived role of inspection, there has been little research on the influence of inspection on lesson planning. Significant literature on inspection in developing countries including Uganda is virtually non-existent. A number of studies carried out in other countries point to poor quality of inspection owing to inadequate resources.

Studies that have found positive results of the influence of inspection on lesson planning include those by Blase and Blasé (2000), Ehren and Visscher (2008) and Adegboyega (2012). Blasé and Blasé (2000) studied teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools using 809 American teachers. The study revealed effective instructional leadership to be characterised by: "talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth" (p. 130), that enhanced planning, teacher efficacy and instructional variety in teaching. The study suggested that effective inspection positively influenced teaching practices, including planning for instruction. Given, however, that the study was conducted in a developed country with adequate resource allocation, findings may not necessarily apply to Uganda, a developing country. In addition, the study concerned instructional supervision by the principals, and not by inspectors, from the teachers' perspectives. The current study incorporated the views of inspectors, headteachers and teachers.

To address the question: 'What effects, if any, do school inspections have on school improvement?' Ehren and Visscher (2008) conducted questionnaire and interview survey with 54 school inspectors of Dutch primary schools. Case studies from 10 schools between 2002 and 2005 were selected. Data was gathered by interviews, questionnaire, observation and document analysis. The study showed that schools started to improve after an inspection visit. The study considered improvement as "actions which schools take in order to improve the achievement levels of their students" (p. 209) in all school activities while the current study focused on lesson planning. These findings are supported by Adegboyega (2012), who examined supervisory strategies as correlates of quality education among 30 secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria with a sample of 280 teachers and 20 supervisors. Adegboyega found that supervisory strategies significantly predicted quality education ( $F(4, 295) = 261.225$ ). The results probably suggest that inspection, if well done, can enhance quality of education. The study considered different types of supervisory strategies (companionable, synergistic, laissez-faire, and authoritarian) while this study focused on inspection characterised by inspection practices. In addition, this study was interested in specific aspects of quality education that are directly influenced by inspection. As such, pedagogy and more specifically lesson planning being a core school activity was the focus of the study rather than consider the broad concept of quality education.

Other studies have found conflicting or negative results. For example, in examining the effects of school inspection, De Wolf and Janssens (2007) found out that literature presented mixed results with some studies revealing positive effects while others provided negative effects. Studies, mainly conducted in the United Kingdom, show that inspection results in changes in teaching strategies and consequently in school improvement. On the other hand, De Wolf and Janssen's review of literature highlights empirical evidence on the negative effects of inspection including teaching to satisfy inspectors and stress. Since there is considerable difference in the findings of the reviewed literature and methodological variations, De Wolf and Janssen called for more research into the effects of inspection but with improved methodologies. The present study was partly a response to this call. Other negative results are in Varnava and Koutsoulis's (2006) quantitative study of 200 teachers in Cyprus in which the teachers perceived inspection as not enhancing teaching practices. Being purely quantitative, the research did not provide an understanding of underlying reasons to teachers' perception and therefore did not provide more in-depth information about the problem. The current study adopted mixed methods to take advantage of the high predictive power of quantitative research and the in-depth nature of qualitative research to better understand the research problem. The findings above corroborates those of National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers [NASUWT] (2011) who found out that inspection significantly increased workload on teachers as they were burdened with preparation of lesson plans in specific formats. The study did not, however, indicate whether the increased workload had any significant influence on the quality of lesson planning.

According to Volante (2004) and Styron and Styron Jr. (2012), due to pressure from stakeholders for teachers to produce high test scores in highly publicised tests, there is a tendency for teachers to skew their teaching plans focusing only on the activities that are assumed to lead to attainment of high scores on the test. These maladaptive preparation strategies tend to hinder more than promote effective preparation since teachers predominantly plan

for teacher-centred pedagogies (Zhao, Mu, & Lu, 2016). Most of the instructional time is used to prepare for and administer tests, while abandoning the approved curricula. Popham (2001) adds that teachers have, as a result of enormous pressure to raise students' scores on high stakes tests, resorted to test targeted instruction; yet there is limited teacher capacity and skills to effectively use assessment information in improving learning (Sayed & Kanjee, 2013).

In a recent study by Habyarimana, Kacker, and Sabarwal (2017), an examination of teacher self-beliefs on effort and ability in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) schools in Uganda found out that the average teaching time in a day was only 2 hours 20 minutes. In addition, 89% of the teachers claimed to have prepared schemes of work while only 67% claimed to have prepared weekly lesson plans. The majority of the teachers (61%) indicated that their performance was evaluated based on student performance in national examinations. What influence then does school inspection have on the quality of lesson planning in secondary schools in Uganda?

The literature relating to inspection and lesson planning has been considered. The reviewed studies centred mainly on inspection in developed countries and basic education. This study, therefore, sought to extend the limited work done in Uganda so that the influence of inspection could be tested out on a much larger sample of teachers, headteachers and inspectors using mixed research methods.

### 3. Research Methodology

Pragmatism is the philosophical underpinning that was adopted for this study. Under pragmatism, researchers use methods that provide the best answers to research questions rather than their representative accuracy and therefore facilitate the realisation of richer conclusions (Creswell, 2009). In order, therefore, to more effectively examine the issue under investigation, the Concurrent Triangulation Mixed Methods Research Design was adopted in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the purpose of breadth, depth of understanding and corroboration. In this design, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at roughly the same time but were analysed separately and independently using traditional techniques associated with each data type.

To investigate the problem, a sample of 22 inspectors, 39 headteachers and 36 deputy headteachers and 302 teachers from 36 secondary schools in Buliisa, Masindi, Kasese and Kyenjojo districts of Western Uganda. Region and Districts were purposively sampled since regions are homogeneous with respect to inspection practices by DES and teaching practices while districts selected had a diverse range of characteristics relevant to phenomenon under study. Stratified Random Sampling was used to select the schools. The secondary schools in the selected districts were stratified in two ways. The first stratification was based on location of the schools so as to include both rural and urban schools. The second level of stratification was based on school status, ensuring that both public and private secondary schools were included. After the schools were sampled, the researcher used Simple Random Sampling to select the teachers. The selection of schools and districts automatically implied the selection of headteachers and/or deputy headteacher and inspectors respectively.

In order to collect relevant data from the respondents, the study used questionnaires and interview guide. A structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to respondents while the interview guide was used to collect data from key informants. Validity was ascertained using Content Validity Index (CVI). The S-CVI/Ave method yielded values of 0.917 and 1.00 for the questionnaire and interview guide respectively. Therefore, the instruments were considered to have high content validity. To determine reliability, a pilot test was conducted and Cronbach's Alpha computed, gave a value of 0.753, indicating a high internal consistency.

Data collected with the questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and ratios were used to describe the data while linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. IBM SPSS 20.0 was used to support the analysis process. Interview data were analysed using qualitative content analysis with the support of Atlas.ti7 software.

### 4. Results/Findings

Table 1. Perceptions of Respondents on Influence of Inspection on Lesson Planning

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	SD	D	UD	A	SA	Ratio
As a result of inspection, teachers consistently prepare schemes of work and lesson plans.	27	69	45	179	57	0.407
As a result of inspection, teachers prepare departmental rather than individual schemes of work.	34	147	41	127	28	1.168
School inspection has an influence on the way teachers plan lessons.	15	38	32	226	66	0.182
Teachers' mastery of the subject and pedagogical skills as seen in their planning are enhanced as a result of inspection.	54	117	40	138	28	1.030
DES inspection has made teachers more creative in the way they plan lessons.	23	50	40	203	61	0.277
Inspections have enabled teachers to stimulate interest in topics by emphasising their rationale at planning phase.	18	57	50	206	46	0.298

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	SD	D	UD	A	SA	Ratio
Due to inspection, teachers now plan to use instructional materials to aid the teaching-learning process.	21	46	41	198	71	0.249
School inspections have aided teachers in planning to address challenges of learners with special needs.	30	74	54	173	46	0.475

The objective of the study was to examine how secondary school inspection influences teachers' lesson planning in Western Uganda. Table 1 shows the frequency table of the cross-tabulation of each of the eight items on the influence of inspection on lesson planning and the relevant response rating as strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), undecided (UD), agree (A), strongly agree (SA).

Column 7 of Table 1 shows that only two items relating to preparation of departmental schemes of work and enhancement of teacher's mastery of the subject matter and pedagogical skills as a result of inspection was negatively perceived by the respondents, representing 25% of the items in the lesson planning subscale. The other six items concerning the influence of inspection on lesson planning, creativity, stimulation of learner interest in subjects, use of instructional materials, and addressing challenges of learners with special needs were positively perceived. These results suggest that inspection positively influenced lesson planning in the study schools.

A Simple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS 20 to determine if lesson planning could be predicted from inspection. The null hypothesis tested was that the regression coefficient (i.e. the slope) was equal to zero. The data was screened for missingness and violation of assumptions prior to analysis. There was no missing data and the assumptions of linearity, independence, and normality were met. The assumption of homogeneity of variances, however, was violated. Despite this violated assumption, the linear regression analysis was run because it is quite robust to violating the assumption about equality of variances (Keith, 2006; Wilcox, Granger, & Clark, 2013).

The results of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis in Table 2 and Table 3 suggest that a statistically significant proportion of the total variation in lesson planning was predicted by inspection,  $F(1, 375) = 90.160, p < .05$ .

Table 2: Analysis of Variance - Inspection and Lesson Planning

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2637.330	1	2637.330	90.160	.000
	Residual	10969.396	375	29.252		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13606.727</b>	<b>376</b>			

Table 3: Coefficients of Regression Analysis - Inspection and Lesson Planning

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.077	2.349		2.162	.031	.459	9.695
	Nature of Inspection	.179	.019	.440	9.495	.000	.142	.216

Additionally, we found the following:

The unstandardized slope (.179) and standardized slope (.440) are statistically different from zero,  $t(375) = 9.495, p < .05$  (Table 3). Specifically, we would expect a one-unit increase in inspection to produce .179 increase in lesson planning.

From Table 3, the confidence interval around the standardized slope does not include zero (.142, .216), further confirming that inspection is a statistically significant predictor of lesson planning. The intercept (i.e. the level of lesson planning when there is no inspection) was 5.077. The value of the Coefficient of Determination,  $R$  squared, indicates that 19.4% of the variance in lesson planning is explained by inspection. According to Cohen (1988), this suggests a moderate influence.

In summary, a linear regression established that inspection could statistically significantly predict lesson planning  $F(1, 375) = 90.160, p < .05$  and that inspection accounted for 19.4% of the explained variability in lesson planning. The regression equation was:

$$\text{Lesson Planning} = 5.077 + 0.179 * (\text{Inspection})$$

The interviewees, on the other hand, revealed various understanding, experiences and perceptions when asked what changes they had observed in lesson planning as a result of inspection. The majority of the participants were of the view that secondary school teachers tended not to make lesson plans but rather opted for schemes of work. Some participants indicated that school inspection could have some influence on lesson planning, but that this influence was not necessarily positive. Teachers implied this narrative when they stated: "Secondary school teachers usually don't make lesson plans. They have been dodging it. They scheme and just go straight to teach", and "... teachers, they do lesson plan after lesson planning, they do not normally follow them."

Consistent with the experience of teachers, headteachers observed that: “now you know in secondary, for example, many teachers do not draw that lesson plan, usually they make lesson notes”, and

... I don't want to deceive you. Most schools ... in rural schools, most teachers don't lesson plan but they have schemes of work. They have schemes of work, they have lesson notes but real lesson planning as it was in the training college, is not common.

Adding that:

... Actual lesson planning in most cases is not there like we have them may be in primary schools. So much so that you find these teachers moving from school A, B, C, D because they have a line of schools where they part-time, and they hover along with the so-called yellow notes. You find the book is 10 years old; one is just moving with it. They don't take time to update their notes and so on.

Another headteacher observed:

To be honest, sometime back it was sort of havoc. Most teachers had run out of the professional way of conducting the educational business particularly by ensuring that these preparations are done. We would see a scenario where a teacher only prepares lesson notes without the scheme of work and lesson plans.

Inspectors agreed with the teachers and headteachers but even raised more concern with the quality of lesson planning in secondary schools despite inspection. Two of the inspectors described the challenge of lesson planning as:

I can say there are no changes because generally in secondary schools, lesson planning is a challenge. Teachers rarely make lesson plans and if they are to make them, they are making for inspectors and so they are sketchy, scanty, not orderly, and not for use but to keep; to just show someone that they are using them. Generally, lesson planning is poor. I can say it is not there almost.

Another inspector, in support, noted:

Lesson planning is generally poor. If I were to rate according to our observations, lesson planning is very poor in secondary schools. But during the training, they always undergo courses of preparing lessons and even keeping records that are very good in teachers' colleges and universities. But practically on the ground, I can rate that may be over 85% of them via scheming they are there but lesson planning they are very poor in it.

The qualitative data corroborates the quantitative findings that there is a statistically significant positive, though moderate, influence of inspection on lesson planning. There were several instances of agreement between the data sets, and for many, qualitative data helped to explain findings in the quantitative data and offers a basis for deeper understanding. For example, there seems to be agreement that preparation of schemes of work improved as a result of inspection while the use of lesson plans generally remained minimal.

## 5. Discussion of the Results/Findings

The study revealed that inspection had some influence on preparation of schemes of work in secondary schools, but that the practice of lesson planning was limited and that the influence of inspection was not only positive. This is inconsistent with the findings by Adegboyega (2012), Blasé and Blasé (2000), and Ehren and Visscher (2008), which posited positive results on the influence of inspection on lesson planning, albeit as components of the teaching and learning process. From theory, it is expected that inspection should improve teacher performance and therefore lesson planning. Lesson planning is the foundation of effective teaching and learning because planning to achieve goals and objectives is an essential first step in any process, and the teaching and learning process is no exception (Haynes, 2010; Heidari, Azizifar, Gowhary, & Abbasi, 2015; Kimosop, 2015; Ramaila & Ramnarain, 2014). Due to the surprise nature of inspections coupled with short duration, teachers may not be accorded adequate time to raise issues and examine what they do and deliberate about the issues with the inspectors who are considered to have fresh ideas and outlooks. According to Mc Cutcheon (1980),

access to new ideas is important, not merely for the sake of newness, but also because of the opportunity it offers for teachers to reflect on the appropriateness of continuing to do things as they have been done in the past. (p. 13)

The other reason could be that teachers only tended to prepare lesson plans during practicum or a few years into the teaching profession. After that, they tended to use mental planning; which unfortunately is not recognised in educational theory and practice. This view is supported by Moradan and Pourasadollah (2014) who found out that senior teachers did not usually use lesson plans despite recognising their importance. According to Moradan and Pourasadollah (2014), the majority of older, experienced and less-educated teachers did not use lesson planning as opposed to younger and novice teachers. Further support is from Kimosop (2015), who pointed out that the majority (55.5%) of the teachers who made schemes of work never referred to them and that 69% of the teachers thought it was not necessary to make lesson plans; revealing that lesson plans were only necessary during school practice.

Another reason for the inadequate preparation of lesson plans is the examination-oriented nature of teaching that has resulted in teachers spending a significant amount of time on assessment (Ramaila & Ramnarain, 2014).

The majority of schools in Uganda conduct three major assessments in a term: beginning of term, mid-term and end of term examinations. This means that teachers are pre-occupied with setting, marking and revision of the tests. Planning lessons demands a lot of time of the teachers, which time is not readily available due to heavy workload. Examination-oriented teaching stifles teacher innovativeness since teachers only put much emphasis on the art of answering questions in an examination. Examinations, and not inspection seem to be the most powerful determinant of classroom activities, with teachers teaching to the test (Habyarimana et al., 2017; Popham, 2001; Sayed & Kanjee, 2013; Styron & Styron Jr., 2012; Volante, 2004; Zhao et al., 2016), without regard to the needs of the students.

In light of this research, the findings and arguments therein seem to support the application of Habermas TCA at a micro-level within the school system. Explaining inspection effects using TCA seems to be well founded since the interaction between inspectors and teachers is essentially a communication (speech acts) through which the inspector seeks to influence the actions of teachers. From this study, drawing from Habermas' concepts of communicative action and strategic action, inspectors in secondary schools in Western Uganda appear to influence teacher actions in a strategic way, steered by power and manifested in traditions, by-laws, and state apparatus. As a result, this attempt seems to be unsuccessful as revealed by the study. This is of course not necessarily a conscious practice of inspectors; it may be seen as a result of the institutional environment in which the inspection system operates.

The finding that teachers most often do not prepare lesson plans and when they do, it is for the inspection purpose suggest that inspectors do not enter into a communicative exchange with teachers, in which each actor presents and argues his/her views with a view to reaching a common understanding via rational discourse, and subsequently an agreed action plan for improvement. Under such arrangement, the inspection may be perceived by the teachers as threatening (Ehren, 2016). This clearly reveals the inherent power differences between inspectors and teachers, in which authorities and traditional views should not be questioned and challenged (a form of colonisation of teachers) – typical of power vested in a hierarchical academic system. For inspection, therefore, to positively influence lesson planning, inspectors should use reasoned justification and argument to change the way teachers think and act (Han, 2002; Salleh & Tan, 2008; Terry, 1997).

## 6. Conclusions

The study investigated the influence of inspection on lesson planning in secondary schools in Western Uganda. This was in relation to the dearth of studies on the influence of inspection in middle- and low-income countries. The study established that while inspection had some limited influence on lesson planning, this influence was not only positive and lesson planning generally remained at a low level. In view of this finding and the discussions thereof and in tandem with the research objective, we conclude that despite reports on the value of inspection in the theoretical, political, institutional and policy debates, this study suggests that inspection has not significantly contributed to improving lesson planning in secondary schools in Uganda. Teachers tend to only prepare lesson plans either after practicum when they transition from student teachers to teachers or when they anticipate that they are likely to be supervised or inspected. Could teachers be losing touch with professionalism? Or can experienced teachers claim to teach effectively without lesson planning?

## 7. Implications of the Research

The theoretical contribution of this research is in the application of the TCA to explain the complex interaction between inspectors and teachers aimed at pedagogical improvement; thereby advancing the existing theory. This research advances theory on inspection by demonstrating that merely visiting schools to conduct inspections does not necessarily lead to improvement. It is rather a question of how the inspectors communicate, with the key stakeholders, prior, during and after the inspection, to minimise negative effects of inspection. Thus, the research provides a unique theoretical contribution to TCA by enhancing our understanding of the process of inspection and how it can lead to improvement in lesson planning practices.

One of the findings was that teachers rarely prepared lesson plans yet, theoretically, lesson planning is a major pre-requisite for successful teaching and learning. It is therefore imperative for researchers to explore the current teachers' lesson planning practices and their perceptions of how the lesson plans facilitate effective teaching-learning process. Furthermore, factors within the school setting or education system that hinder the preparation and use of lesson plans in secondary schools in Uganda could be studied. Understanding teachers' beliefs, practices, attitudes and perceptions is important for improving educational processes.

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