

Title: Teacher inspection and in-service training as means for teacher and school improvement

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One of the developing sectors of education world-wide is the evaluation of teachers (Elliot 1996; Marshal, 1998). Teacher evaluation can contribute to the definition of effective teaching and productivity in schools. Effectiveness and production in schools is something that the educational community is trying to define in a continuous inquiry (e.g. Van Der Werf, Creemers, De Jong, & Klaver, 2000) without coming to a universal consensus, due to cultural differences and the way each educational system operates. It is very important for every country, every educational system, and every school, as well as for every classroom, to define teacher and teaching effectiveness that is suited to their objectives as this definition can contribute to a more effective teacher evaluation schemes. On this research paper the task is to approach teacher evaluation in a particular school system in an attempt to inform teachers and administrators how teachers understand their evaluation through inspection.

Inspection is connected with the accountability of teachers and its main purpose is to ensure that the standards in education are satisfied. Goddard and Emerson (1997), support that inspection should promote high educational outcomes, in particular high attainment, good progress, and a positive response from pupils. Judgment should be based on the extent to which teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects or areas they teach; set high expectations so as to challenge pupils and deepen their knowledge and understanding; plan effectively; employ methods and organizational strategies which match curricular objectives and the needs for all pupils; manage pupils well and achieve high standards and discipline; use time and resources

effectively; assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively, use assessment to inform teaching; and use homework effectively to reinforce and/or extend what is learned in school. OFSTED (1995), in the United Kingdom, define the aim of inspection taking into account the needs of the parents and the community. The inspection process also takes into consideration the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Furlang (2002) suggests that inspection can play a key role in the development of a competitive quasi-market environment in the schools, something that can lead to the improvement of schools.

The outcome of inspection is evaluation reflected in rating scales, for example, or on other ways of representing teachers' performance. According to Glatthorn (2000), teacher evaluation can have two levels, the individual and the organizational, and two purposes, improvement and accountability. He also adds that, faculty assessment for school improvement is the evaluation of an entire school faculty or a team of teachers in order to effect general school or departmental improvement. Glatthorn connects teacher-evaluation with rating, which is the evaluation of an individual teacher in order to make administrative decisions relative to accountability, for example, tenure, promotion, and renew contract. Danielson and McGreal (2000), see as the final goal for teacher evaluation, the improvement of the educational process through programs of professional development.

#### *Teacher evaluation: Teachers Vs. Administrators*

Teacher evaluation usually takes place within a political context following the direction of improvement or accountability. This gives rise to a conflict between the various participants as to the purposes and outcomes of the evaluation, inspection, or appraisal process. Teachers and their representative institutions (e.g. teacher unions, principal associations, etc.) see the main purpose of teacher evaluation as professional development. School and teacher improvement through

retraining and INSET are the focus of activity, and the purpose of the evaluation is to make decisions about the appropriate training required (Galton, 2000). Administrators see the main purpose of teacher evaluation as one of accountability in which the main function is to control the quality of the educational resources, in particular, to control the teaching quality by removing weak or poor teachers from the system and rewarding the outstanding practitioners (OELMEK, 1998\*). Beyond this there is a wider debate about the way to promote educational change. The professional approach, as advocated by Fullan (2000), emphasizes “collegiality” self-evaluation, critical reflection etc., while the approach adopted by administrators is more technical in that it proscribes both curriculum content and teaching method. In the UK, the government through the use of inspection attempts to exercise central control of the educational process.

Therefore teacher evaluation and inspection should be connected to teacher appraisal. Appraisal is a continuous and systematic process intended to help individual teachers with their professional development and career planning, and to help ensure that the in-service training and development of teachers matches the complementary needs of individual teachers and schools. Goddard and Emerson (1997), discuss two models of teacher appraisal, the staff development model and the accountability model. According to the staff development model features, it celebrates which teacher is doing well; it identifies areas where two teachers may be able to improve; it assists the career development of the teacher; it integrates the school and the individual teacher and identifies areas of mutual interest; it identifies the support and in-service training which the teacher requires in order to progress, and it provides the basis for school audit and review. The accountability model feature, it identifies incompetent teachers; it identifies weaknesses in a teacher’s performance; it assesses performance for purposes of pay and promotion and it provides evidence for any disciplinary procedures. On the other hand, Wearmonth, Edwards, and

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\* OELMEK is a high school Teachers’ Union in Cyprus

Richmond (2000), support that appraisal should be within the context of development. Within the appraisal scheme, the supervisor can identify the needs of the teachers, establish priorities, and design the necessary activities for the future.

### *Teacher inspection in Cyprus*

The whole administrative structure of the educational system of Cyprus is highly centralized (UNESCO, 1997). The Ministry of Education is responsible, through its inspectors, to supervise the schoolwork, to evaluate teachers' performance and school administration every two years and advise them on new methods of teaching (OELMEK, 1999). The principals of schools and the inspectors work together on teacher evaluation. Especially important is the contribution of the principal on the general behavior and actions of the teacher in the everyday life at school, but the final decision rests with the inspector (OELMEK). According to the Manifest of School Reform (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004) the evaluation of the school work is exhausted only within teachers' evaluation, which is based in a traditional and counterproductive system of external evaluation from inspectors.

In its current form, the institution of inspection consists of the hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the inspector. The inspector is the vehicle of the State's educational policy. With his/her promotion to the post of inspector, the teacher becomes part of the Ministry (Theophilides, 1994). In Cyprus, according to School Operation Regulations (Ministry of Education, 2003), both schools and teachers are subject to inspection during a school year. An inspector who used to teach the same subject matter, carries out the inspection of teachers. Kikas (2000) found that the way in which inspection is carried out today in Cyprus, satisfies neither the teachers nor the principals. He believes that a new method of inspection must be found, which will form a real motive for evolution and progress. Objectivity and impartiality should form the

main characteristics of this new method. Kokkinos (2000) found that teachers prefer inspection as a feedback on their teaching achievements, and not for promotion purposes. The principal appears to be more accepted as an adviser and a collaborator. Apart from the Principal and the inspector, the teacher himself or herself must also participate in the drawing up of the annual report. In order to see the inspector as improver, teachers want him/her to become an adviser and not an evaluator (Koutsoulis, 1997). This is, in fact, what the Organization of Secondary School Teachers of Cyprus, proclaims.

Another major concern, particularly for principal and teachers, is that the picture of the school, which the inspection produces, should be accurate, fair and representative (Gray & Wilcox, 1995). Teachers often say that an inspection is a snapshot of a school over a day or more, perhaps even a week, and so cannot be a true picture. According to Pashardis (1997), these visits are occasional, they ignore the other factors influencing the learning process. The non-systematic character of these visits is reinforced by the vague and indefinite remarks of the inspector, which do not help the teacher to improve his/her teaching methods. The occasional character of teacher inspection does not contribute to the improvement of the quality of the education provided (Hopkins, Harris, Watling, & Beresford, 1999).

According to OELMEK (1999), teacher evaluation as it exists today does not consider the surroundings that the educational process is taking place in. It is not possible to evaluate the teacher's work without taking into consideration the circumstances under which it is realized. Many factors, which might influence the personal and collective work of the teacher, should also be considered (Iwanicki, 2001). Hence, the Cypriot Non-party related Teachers' Movement (1997), believes that instead of the term "teacher evaluation", it is imperative to use the term "evaluation of the educational procedure". Within the framework of evaluation of educational

work, all those involved in the educational process (teachers, principals, school counsellors, Ministry of Education), as well as all factors influencing the learning process (material and technical infrastructure, curriculum, teaching means, etc.), are subject to evaluation. Evaluation is not a personal and private affair, but a collective process within the school.

Teacher inspection and evaluation is not necessarily a task of an outside expert. Sullivan and Wright (2002) suggested peer appraisal, which they call the collaborative group counseling referral process. This process can facilitate the development of effective working relations between the intern and teachers. In this way teachers can feel more relaxed without the fear of the outsider experts (Marshall, 1998). Another suggestion in teacher appraisal, which comes from Goddard and Emerson (1997), is self-evaluation. Wilcox, Schonberger, Kennedy and Kasunich (1998), believe that teachers' self-evaluation will enhance teacher autonomy as teachers themselves are mainly responsible for the continuing improvement of instruction. Teachers should be encouraged to recognize the value of self-appraisal of their work and carry it out. Wilcox, et al., also believe that teachers' self-evaluation will enhance teacher autonomy. Due to the fact that teachers themselves are mainly responsible for the continuing improvement of instruction, administrators should be responsible for the encouragement and facilitation of that improvement. Teachers through action research can identify problems in the field and can propose solutions that are culturally sensitive for their area (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2000). Weiss and Weiss (1998), conclude that the next generation of inspection systems will further integrate teacher accountability with professional growth.

### *School effectiveness and school change*

Harris (2004) supports that school leadership and school improvement is a complex, messy and unpredictable enterprise, as we do not know exactly what focus of leadership result in school

improvement across different school context and in different types of schools. Effective change can be implemented in the school by the teachers and the administrators, when they must feel owners and active participants of the change effort (Oromaner, 1998). Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) support that several reform strategies in schools neglected to focus on classrooms, teaching and instruction, and this resulted not to contribute on the improvement of student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2004) also support that the more powerful mechanism for transformational leadership is shared vision among all involved parties especially the teachers, high levels of motivation and commitment, collaborative cultures, and extensive use of formative evidence widely shared. Teachers, as a first component of any reform effort, must share the vision of the school improvement plan (Jenlink, Reigeluth, Carr & Nelson, 1998). That does not mean that the teachers should initiate, plan, and implement the whole reform change, but that any effort must consider the teachers' role as essential.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) believe that school improvement efforts should focus on among other things on student achievement, empowering in aspiration, research based context specific etc. Riley, Heneveld and Harris (2002) support that school effectiveness and school improvement are under five headings: Supporting inputs, children's characteristics, school climate, enabling conditions, teaching/learning process, and student outcomes. Harris and Hopkins (2000), raised the issue that despite a wide variety of activities in the name of school improvement, there is still a tendency for schools to focus change efforts at the level of the school rather on the level of classroom. This does not apply for the Improving the Quality of Education For All Project (IQEA) as this particular model of school improvement focuses on cultural change in the school.

#### *Contribution of the research*

As is well-defined (UNESCO, 1997), secondary school teachers in Cyprus lack training in

teaching and pedagogics. In addition, INSET programs are rare within the Cyprus school system (Angelides, 2002). Teacher inspection that will study, in depth, teachers' strengths and weaknesses followed by effective in-service training, can help teachers to improve their teaching methodology within the high schools in Cyprus, towards the effort for school improvement and to contribute to the improvement of society in general. There is a feeling, not only in Cyprus but world wide, that the teacher is doing his/her job without any support, especially the new teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1997). The present study can inform school policy makers on how teachers feel about inspection and what they propose for more effective inspection. Due to the fact that research in school administration in Cyprus is in its early stages, the present research can contribute to the generation of discussion on teaching improvement and school effectiveness.

### **Objectives of the study**

The present study focuses on identifying teachers' opinions on the existing evaluation system through inspection and how teachers understand the connection between teacher evaluation and school improvement. Specifically, the present research examines:

- ⇒ The teachers' attitude on inspection
- ⇒ How teachers understand the relationship between them and the inspector
- ⇒ Which member of the educational community teachers prefer to evaluate them

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the present research quantitative data were collected in an effort to study the problem from both angles. The self-administered questionnaire was used for the present research as the main instrument for data collection. There were 44 questions in the questionnaire, 16 of which included more than 3 sub-questions. Almost all questions were answered with the use of Likert scale with number-codes from 1 - 5 where, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral

opinion, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree. In order to ensure that subjects voluntarily participated in the research, a cover letter was attached to the front of the questionnaire in order to explain to the participants the purposes of the research asking them to participate voluntarily. According to Cohen et al. (2000), it is very important that the participants have the option to refuse to participate in the study and the researcher has to provide this option. Privacy of participants is also a concern of the researcher and to ensure that their privacy is guaranteed, no school names, or names of the participants appear on the reporting of the data. Anonymity was also another concern for the researcher, as “the essence of a questionnaire, as a research tool, is that it is in the hands of the respondent, and is completed by him or her” (Johnson, 1994, p. 37). Therefore, in the cover letter the researcher asked the participants not to write their names on the questionnaire.

### ***Sample Selection***

The present research uses as its target population, all Cyprus public Lyceum and Gymnasium teachers that teach full-time, during the school year 2002-03. According to the data from the Ministry of Education for the school year 2002-03, those teachers number about 5000 (Republic of Cyprus, 2003). The selection method that was used is the random selection of schools and participants. The researchers build up a sample that satisfied the needs of the specific research. Among the 92 schools, 30 schools were selected in all four towns in Cyprus, 19 urban and 11 rural. The number of the questionnaires that were distributed was based on the size of the school. Therefore, in 16 schools with less than 30 teachers five questionnaires were distributed, in 10 schools with 30-60 teachers 8 questionnaires were distributed and in four schools with more than 60 teachers 10 questionnaires were distributed. In each school the researcher appointed one representative in order to distribute and collect the questionnaires from the teachers. The selection of the teachers was made with stratified random sampling, according to their teaching subject. For the research 200 questionnaires were distributed and all of them were returned

answered. Some characteristics of the sample are: gender, 48% males and 52% females, teaching experience average for 17 years, status of the staff, 72% teachers, 26% Deputy principal/Coordinating Assistant principal and 2% principals. Teachers stated that they were inspected on average about 14 times during their career

### *Administration of the questionnaires*

The questionnaires were given after obtaining the permission of the Ministry of Education. In each school the researcher assigned one representative to administer and collect the questionnaires. The questionnaires were given out by hand. The teachers returned the completed questionnaires to the research representative in their school responsible for the collection. In order to ensure the anonymity of the teacher an equal number of envelopes, duly signed by the researcher, were given along with the questionnaires so that every teacher could return the completed questionnaire sealed in this envelope. It is believed that this method encouraged the teachers to give spontaneous responses. All teachers were given two weeks to return the questionnaires. In three schools the teachers took a one-week extension. Finally, all representatives managed to collect all the questionnaires in the sealed envelopes. This data selection took place in May 2003.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **Statistical analyses**

For the analysis of the data we employed SPSS (Norusis, 1993) in order to obtain the frequencies, the percentages, the mean and the standard deviation. It was important to use those basic statistical analyses as there are not adequate research studies, on the specific cultural setting, that can offer suggestions for the use of more complicated statistical analyses like factor analysis.

Each statement was tested if it was statistically different from a neutral opinion; therefore, the one sample t-test was employed with the test value set at 3, which is the midpoint of the scale.

### Attitude to inspection process

The attitude towards the inspection process was measured with nine questions. The responses of the teachers appear on Table 1. These questions study the degree to which teachers believe that inspection can enhance students' learning and improve teaching methods.

Table 1. Attitude to inspection process – Inspection as improver

Question	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Neutral Opinion</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Strongly agree</i>		Mean	SD
	#*	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Inspection is useful for enhancing children's learning	46	23.0	73	36.5	17	8.5	55	27.5	9	4.5	2.54	1.24
Inspection is useful for improving teaching methods	26	13.0	60	30.0	13	6.5	87	43.5	14	7.0	3.02	1.24
The evaluation of teaching by inspectors increases teaching productivity.	21	10.5	66	33.0	31	15.5	71	35.5	11	5.5	2.93	1.15
The evaluation of teaching by inspectors increases students' achievement.	37	18.5	100	50.0	31	15.5	29	14.5	3	1.5	2.31	0.98
The evaluation of teaching by inspectors is necessary for teachers' promotion.	32	16.0	44	22.0	22	11.0	78	39.0	24	12.0	3.09	1.32
Inspection is a waste of time	37	18.5	91	45.5	26	13.0	31	15.5	15	7.5	2.48	1.18
Inspection is stressful	13	6.5	23	11.5	11	5.5	96	48.0	57	28.5	3.81	1.16
When the inspector leaves I know exactly what to do in my teaching (How to offer my lesson).	32	16.0	96	48.0	29	14.5	39	19.5	4	2.0	2.44	1.04
The present system of teachers' evaluation needs changing	6	3.0	4	2.0	8	4.0	76	38.0	106	53.0	4.36	0.89

\*# = Sample size

From the results, it appears that teachers have a rather negative attitude towards inspection, as they tend to believe that inspection is not useful for enhancing children's learning, or teaching

productivity while at the same time they believe that inspection is stressful. On the three questions that teachers had to state their opinion as to whether inspection improves the performance of the individuals, teaching productivity or students' achievement, the majority of the teachers disagree or strongly disagree. Those findings show that teachers don't see inspection as a mechanism for improvement and they don't accept the role of inspection as it is functioning today in schools. The only statement, on which teachers rather agree, is that evaluation of teaching by inspectors is necessary for teachers' promotion. Finally it appears that teachers see a need for change of the existing evaluation system, as they have a very distinct opinion on the need for change for the present evaluation system.

It is interesting that teachers perceive teachers' inspection unrelated to student learning, possibly because they believe that learning is solely a dimension of teacher practice and at the same time they disagree that inspection is a waste of time. It is clear that inspection for teachers can mean evaluation and not improvement of the teaching process. Even though there was a more positive reaction to the statement that inspection was useful for improving teaching methods, it appears that teachers are not enthusiastic on this issue. Towards the same direction is the suggestion from the teachers that inspection should focus on assisting rather on control. In this way inspection can lead to improvement, rather than to controlling teachers. Teachers, according to the Cypriot non-party related Teachers' Movement (1997), believe that inspection is a form of controlling the teachers and the whole system of education. The Teachers' Union OELMEK (1999), also believes that inspection can be used by school administration as a means of controlling the teachers and forcing them to function in a particular way. It appears that school administration does not persuade teachers that inspection can really support them in their profession. There is a demand for reconsideration of teacher evaluation to focus basically on the improvement of the teacher rather than on evaluation (Searfoss & Enz, 1996). In the present research, it appears that

teachers tend to confirm those conclusions and it is possible that the negative attitude of teachers towards inspection is the struggle between them and the administration of the school.

In the present research, respondents are called upon to state their opinions on the need for improvement in Cyprus schools. The way teachers feel about the prospect of school change can be the initial step for those efforts. From teachers' responses it appears that teachers do not connect inspection with school improvement. Teachers have stated that they do not know exactly what to do in their teaching when the inspector leaves. This finding shows that inspectors do not take the time for adequate feedback to the teachers. These findings indicate again, that inspection is not connected with school improvement, but more to what one might call "marking".

### Relationships between teachers and inspectors

Table 2. Relationships between teachers and inspectors.

Question	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Neutral Opinion</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Strongly agree</i>		Mean	SD
	#*	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Inspectors have a good relationship with teachers	6	3.0	51	25.5	51	25.5	88	44.0	4	2.0	3.17	0.93
Inspectors are fully aware of teachers' needs	24	12.0	98	49.0	38	19.0	35	17.5	5	2.5	2.50	1.00
It is important to have a good relationship with inspector	3	.5	5	2.5	16	8.0	84	42.0	92	46.0	4.29	0.84
Question	<i>Unhappy</i>		<i>Stressed</i>		<i>Worried</i>		<i>Relaxed</i>		<i>Happy</i>			Nominal scale
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
How do you feel when the inspector sits in on your lesson and evaluates your performance	1	0.5	85	42.5	85	42.5	27	13.5	2	1.0		

\*# = Sample size

The results of the study show that teachers stated that have a rather positive relationship with the inspectors. More teachers agree than disagree on the statement that inspectors have good relationships with teachers, showing that there is a good opportunity that the inspection process

can function on a positive way. This finding is also reinforced from teachers' reactions on the statement that is important to have a good relationship with the inspectors, where almost all teachers agree or strongly agree. If the inspector is in a strong hierarchical position and the criteria for teacher evaluation are subjective then teachers might need to take a rather friendly relationship with the inspector so they satisfy his/her authority. A rather negative reaction is the responses on the statement that inspectors are fully aware of teachers' needs.

Even though more teachers seem to believe that teachers and inspectors have good relationship they also believe that this relationship is very important for them. It seems that teachers do feel stressed and worried when the inspector sits in the classroom and evaluates them. Being stressed and worried can mean that teacher-inspector relationship is not a collegial relationship, but, rather, a relationship between a superior and the subordinate employee, something that needs further investigation. According to the Cyprus teacher union (OELMEK, 1999), this relationship is not effective due to the fact that inspectors have failed in their role as counselors, as their administrative role predominates over their role as counselors. Earley, Fidler & Ousten (1996), believe that partnership between teachers and the governing body ensures mutual understanding and trust, two important dimensions of the teacher-inspector relationship, which show that the inspector is a supporter rather than an evaluator.

From the teachers' responses, it appears that the vast majority of the teachers feel stressed or worried when the inspector sits in on their lesson. The main question here is how teachers define stress, if they mean that they are called upon to work extra hours, or if they really believe that inspection takes them to the limits, and to what extent teachers and inspectors communicate on the content of the inspection process. According to Kokkinos (2000), who conducted a research among secondary school teachers in Cyprus, teachers' inspection is the basic source of teachers'

stress, conclusions that agree with similar research studies by McCormick and Solman (1992) and Papastilianou (1997). This stress is even more harmful when teacher inspection is directly connected with promotion. It is important that the frequency of inspection increase, because this can reduce the stress on the part of teachers as the more frequent visits by the inspector may reduce the distance between the teachers and the inspector, which might make their relationship more conformable.

According to the results of the present research, the majority of teachers believe that inspectors are not very aware of their needs, as only 20% of them agree or strongly agree with this statement. This finding should make inspectors very alert, at least to prove to teachers that they are aware of their needs. This can be the first step in improving their relationships, and the inspection process. According to Rowland and Birkett (1992), the person who is going to conduct the appraisal should know the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses very well and should have the closest interest in the performance and welfare of a subordinate (Guskey and Sparks, 2000). Even though inspectors had been teachers for several years within the Cyprus educational system, it appears that they are not aware of the changes in school and society. This is important regarding the way teachers control the behaviour of students and the fact that students are faced with a variety of information from society. A major problem for Cyprus high school teachers is that they do not have the opportunities to improve their teaching skills (Angelides, 2002).

**Teachers’ opinion about the “most suitable person to advise them**

Table 3. Most suitable person to advise teachers

Question	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral Opinion</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	Mean	SD
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	#*	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
<i>The most suitable people to evaluate teachers in doing their work well could be</i>												
The inspector.	26	13.0	55	27.0	24	12.0	77	38.5	18	9.0	3.03	1.24
The principal	33	16.5	49	24.5	26	13.0	79	39.5	13	6.5	2.95	1.25
The coordinating assistant principal	20	10.0	28	14.0	23	11.5	94	47.0	35	17.5	3.48	1.22
Both the Inspector and the principal	27	13.5	44	22.0	31	15.5	81	40.5	17	8.5	3.09	1.23
Both the Inspector and the coordinating assistant principal	19	9.5	34	17.0	27	13.5	90	45.0	30	15.0	3.39	1.21
Both the principal and the coordinating assistant principal	31	15.5	45	22.5	29	14.5	75	37.5	20	10.0	3.04	1.28
The principal, the Inspector and the coordinating assistant principal in partnership	22	11.0	30	15.0	23	11.5	60	30.0	65	32.5	3.58	1.36

\*# = Sample size

It appears from Table 3 that teachers prefer insiders for evaluation and advice, as the coordinating assistant principal is the one that teachers prefer more. The most favorite combination is when all three administrators act together. The results show that teachers seem to trust the coordinator more for their evaluation, possibly because is the closer administrator to them and he/she is more sensitive on their concerns.

The necessity of finding the appropriate person to evaluate the teacher, an outside expert or an inside supporter, is of major importance for finding the necessary inspection schemas. Is the principal the most appropriate person to evaluate the teacher? Is the most immediate supervisor, who is the coordinating assistant principal of the department, the most appropriate person to evaluate the teacher? Which person among the administrative personnel of the school do teachers prefer to conduct teacher inspection? The answer to this research question points in one direction, that teacher prefer mostly the coordinating assistant principal, a person who is physically close to them. The coordinating assistant principal is also closer to the teachers as he/she teaches the same

subject matter. That research question needs further investigation, as it is necessary to understand in depth how teachers understand not only the assistance that they get from the coordinator, or the principal, or the inspector, but also regarding the quality of this assistance.

One reason why the principal as adviser is not accepted by the teachers with enthusiasm is that the principal does not have the same specialization as the teachers and is not able to assist. Of course, on educational matters, the principal is supposed to be more expert and able to help the teachers. From the three administrators within the school system, teachers seem to believe that the coordinating assistant principal can help them do their work, perhaps due to the following two reasons: he/she is of the same specialization, and he/she is a fellow-colleague who is always with them. The coordinating assistant principal is usually the person with the most experience in each specialization in the school. He/she has no real authority to evaluate the teacher, but he/she is the immediate supervisor of the teacher. It is possible that the teacher sees the coordinating assistant principal as a colleague and not as the one who evaluates the teacher from a superior position and possibly because teachers feel more comfortable with them.

The coordinating assistant principals work with the teachers in the school and have a day-to-day interaction, teachers and coordinating assistant principals are closer in age, they teach most of the time in the same classrooms and they know, personally, most of the time, the students. Those realities make teachers and coordinating assistant principals feel like partners in a task that they have to achieve together. In a modern, changing society, students' attitudes and behavior change rapidly and coordinating assistant principals, as they are in the field with the teachers, can understand them better. Additionally, the coordinating assistant principal knows the strengths and weaknesses of each fellow-colleague and, therefore, they can help in a more meaningful way.

Teachers were also presented with combinations of the existing administrators and it appears that the most favored combination for the teachers is when all three administrators in partnership evaluate the teacher. It is interesting that the combination of coordinating assistant principal and inspector is also a favored combination for the teachers for teacher inspection, while the combination of principal and coordinating assistant principal is the least favored combination. This shows that teachers do want, on the one hand, the most approachable person from within the school but, on the other hand, they understand that coordination with outside experts can also be acceptable. According to Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon (1998), in the USA, appraisal systems are increasingly focusing on teachers' development by principals and other senior members of the staff rather than by outsiders.

Another problem in Cyprus schools is that teachers are part of the school system as a whole and not part of a single school building or a district. Teachers are government employees and the school system can move them from one school to the other each year without consider if the schools belong to the same area or not. This does not allow the teacher to feel identified with the school unit and create a certain school vision for the school. Another problem that makes the school climate unstable is the fact that teachers and principals move from one school to other, especially in rural schools (Matsaggouras, 1999). This creates a situation whereby the teachers and the principal do not feel identified with their school, as they are not sure if they will go to another school the following year. Usually teachers do not choose the school that they want to be employed in. One possible solution to that problem is that the principal can advise on more general matters, and the coordinating assistant principal on specific matters related to the subject of teaching.

## **Discussion: Contribution of the study to the policy makers and to the field of school administration**

The results of the present study show the strong belief of the teachers that the present system of teachers' inspection needs changing. Possibly teachers believe that they have very little to obtain from inspection; on the contrary, they suffer a lot of stress. If the Cyprus educational system is to move towards change for improvement this should start with the way teachers and inspectors work together. School administrators within the educational system of Cyprus are very experienced teachers, without always having extra qualifications, but the major problem is, that they appear distant from the field, as they used to teach in previous decades, and they are not familiar with the way young teachers and teenagers think. On the other hand, they know very well the problems that a teacher faces in his/her everyday life within the classroom. Administrator-teacher relationships should be a relationship of mutual responsibility towards the effort for school improvement. There should be a shared decision-making in the school with a certain amount of autonomy, creating a cohesive unit that is working for the good of the school, rather than each one working for its' own good. It is assumed that participation and involvement of the whole staff in decision-making about school policy, school vision, learning priorities and activities, guarantees success of the school improvement efforts (Reed & Learmonth, 2001). According to Koutsoulis (2002), teachers were never asked to suggest any changes, rather, they are simply implementers of the decision-making of the Ministry of Education. The present research found that there is a need for change, and the school system should consider how teachers feel in order to start implementing the necessary concerning teachers' evaluation through inspection.

Another finding that is compatible with the attitudes of the teacher towards inspection, is the degree to which accept the existing administrators as their advisers. The present study can

contribute towards the direction of finding the appropriate person to conduct the evaluation of teachers, within a change effort on teacher inspection. Teachers are not enthusiastic on suggesting the inspector as the person to evaluate them. They suggest the coordinating assistant principal as the most acceptable evaluator and adviser for the teachers. This finding calls for the need of the adviser to be closer to the teacher as a partner, not as an inspector to the educational process. The contribution of the present research study to the field of school administration is that inspection of teachers should take into account the most immediate supervisor of the teachers, as it appears that they can provide more assistance to the teachers through appraisal schemas.

Inspectors seem not to be considered by the teachers as those who can implement changes. It is possible that teachers feel that they are alone, without any power. It seems that they do not expect inspectors to help them to improve their teaching methods. It is possible that teachers live under a feeling of helplessness, knowing what the problems exist, but no one is there to take the responsibility for improvement. It can be true that teachers understand the need for improvement, but they have no hope that the inspectors can be the bearers of improvement within the schools. If this is the reality, it is essential for the school system to try to understand how teachers feel for their profession and work to satisfy teachers' needs.

### **Recommendations for the Cyprus school system**

Overall, one can conclude that teachers believe that the inspection policy within the educational system of Cyprus is not able to provide teachers with the academic support they need, rather, it is a stressful and useless activity, as teachers responded, that simply allows the system to function as it has functioned for the last 40 years. As promotion is based on age, those that have this "talent" have no reason to go against this system. The system is functioning for the benefit of

those who have the power in their hands and no one cares about students' interests. It is very clear that the inspection system, first of all, needs re-definition of its goals and objectives towards the effort to improve the educational process within state schools. Administrators are supposed to be responsible for providing teachers with academic support. In practice within the Cyprus educational system, the principal cannot provide any academic support to the teachers, as this is not within his/her official duties (Kyriakides, 1997), and the reason is that the role of the principal is mainly administrative (Pashiardis, 1997). The teachers' union demands that inspectors also become advisers of the teacher and not only evaluators.

Teachers seem to prefer the coordinator to conduct the evaluation of the teacher. It is obvious that the coordinator is a successful institution. This is a very positive aspect in the effort for school improvement and students' success, as teachers have the support they need for their curriculum planning. It is possible that the coordinator is seen by the teachers as a colleague and not as the one that evaluates the teacher from a superior position. The coordinators work with the teacher in the school and have day-to-day interaction with them, teachers and coordinators are closer in age, and they teach the same students most of the time and they know the students personally most of the times. Those realities make teachers and coordinators feel like partners in a task that they have to achieve together. In our modern changing society, students' attitudes and behavior change rapidly and coordinators, as they are in the field with the teachers, can understand them better. It is imperative for our State school system to empower the teachers and prepare them for the challenges that are coming in a modern society and a modern school. The results call for the empowerment of the coordinator as the immediate supervisor in the State school system in Cyprus. The coordinator might need to get more time to support the teachers academically, to work closer with the other administrators in the school in order to provide this support to the teachers. It can be useful for the school to invest more in the coordinators, by giving them more

training to become trainers and mentors for the teachers. It is also important for the principal and the inspector to become more academic leaders, than administrators or evaluators.

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