

## How might education policy makers use evidence from school inspections to drive system-wide improvements?

### Key Ideas:

- School inspections provide a rich source of system and policy-level evidence.
- Clarity of the purpose of inspections is a key ingredient in system-level impact.
- Ensuring coherence between inspection system design and educational and national policy is paramount.

School inspections are a well-established part of the accountability framework in many GCC countries, especially in the UAE. Over time, inspection has helped to raise standards and the quality of education in many schools, and Tribal has been proud to have played a part through its involvement in the delivery of inspections across the GCC.

Across the world, school inspections have helped to support improvements through a focus on the quality of provision and outcomes in individual schools. School leaders and other agencies have used the outcomes from inspections to help focus improvement efforts where they are most needed. School inspections also provide a rich seam of evidence for policymakers and those interested in system-level improvement, too.

### Commonly-agreed purposes of inspection:

(Ehren, 2022):

- To **control** and ensure compliance with statutory regulations.
- To give **support and advice** on the improvement of school process and outcomes.
- To act as a **liaison agent** between the top of the education system and schools by informing schools of decisions taken by the centre, and to inform the centre of the realities at school level.

## Leveraging inspection, and the common challenges

Crucially, **the liaison function of inspection** provides an opportunity for policy makers at the centre to understand the realities of policy implementation at the school level, as well as for schools to implement decisions taken at the centre. While countries often collect large amounts of information and data at the system level (for example, from national testing), there is often significant untapped potential for integrating and using evidence from other sources, including from inspections. However, the OECD (2012) noted some common policy challenges in this respect:

- Organising the collection and analysis of information from inspections at the national level.
- Clearly communicating the results of system evaluation.
- Ensuring the effective use of results by stakeholders throughout the system.

**Tribal recommends** that policymakers and other stakeholders ensure they use evidence from inspection to inform and drive system-level improvements. We are clear that policy making at the system level should always be informed by high-quality evidence, but not be constrained by the availability of such information. Through our experience in designing and implementing inspections in a wide variety of contexts, we are well-placed to support and advise stakeholders to maximise the use of inspections to inform policymaking and to drive system-wide improvements.

**For more information on using school inspections to drive system-wide improvement, get in touch with one of our Middle East Education Specialists.**