

# Unit 3: Report Writing

## INTRODUCTION

Report writing is central to the duties and responsibilities of all inspectors. Its purpose is to provide all the stakeholders with key issues and findings identified during the inspection. A report should highlight key areas which require immediate attention, and provide advice on possible actions to be taken.

The report should be written in clear, simple language. It should be substantial, coherent, factually correct, free from contradictions, as well as being friendly, sympathetic and informative to the user.

Inspection reports generally start with the description of the situation, followed by relevant comments and end with recommendations.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- State different types of reports
- Collect and organise data that goes into the report
- Assess and evaluate the situation
- Write comprehensive inspection reports
- Write reports using appropriate and acceptable format, language and style.

## TYPES OF REPORTS

There are four main types of reports inspectors are required to write. The type or nature of a report is mainly determined by the kind of inspection being conducted. However, as mentioned earlier, the final intention of an inspection report is to inform the different stakeholders of the quality of education being provided.

Inspection reports are therefore essential instruments in the measurement of educational standards of attainment by learners. They also inform the reader regarding the quality of education being provided as well as the management and administration of the school.

### Activity 3a

We have mentioned that there are four main types of inspection reports.  
Can you identify them and highlight their differences?

## COMMENT

It is very important for inspectors to understand the differences in the types of inspection reports, since the nature will dictate the extent to which they may or may not be detailed.

The four main types of inspection reports are:

1. Full Inspection Report
2. Management and Administration Report
3. Subject Report
4. Follow-up Report

## **FULL INSPECTION REPORT**

This is a report that looks at the school administration and all the subject areas in the school. It covers, among others, the evaluation of the organisation of the school, the organisation and teaching of each subject in the school, teachers' performance, curriculum issues, buildings, accounts, discipline and many others. A full inspection is sometimes referred to as a panel inspection because it may involve a group of inspectors undertaking the inspection. It therefore requires a lot of preparation and coordination.

It is important to stress that in a full/panel inspection, pre-meetings are a requirement because this is where the team leader allocates duties and responsibilities to individual inspectors and objectives agreed upon. Other issues that might be discussed may include the logistics of transport, time frame, subsistence allowance etc.

## **MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

This type of report concentrates mainly on the manner in which a school is being managed. It may be supplemented, where possible, with a general look at teaching. In most countries in the SADC region, school profile proformas/checklists have been developed for inspections. Although they contain a lot of information, it is necessary at times to supplement these proformas with a few pages of notes and comments on particular aspects of the institution looked at in depth. Notes should be concise, to the point, describing the situation as it was found, making valid comments and ending with recommendations.

Finally, the report should reflect on the extent to which management makes good use of all its available resources to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for the school and learners.

## **SUBJECT INSPECTION**

This kind of report should focus on learners' achievements and progress in relation to the areas of learning. It should be based on knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum by inspectors, and how the curriculum is being implemented in the classroom.

This is achieved through:

- the examination of the objectives of teaching the subjects, the teaching process itself and the quality of instruction
- the organisation of the subject
- deployment of subject staff
- syllabus and schemes of work
- allocation of periods
- availability of relevant quality instructional materials
- access to facilities including the library and special rooms
- the quality of learners' work
- teachers' records and any other factors that may contribute to the achievement of the learning objectives.

These assist in identifying areas where the teacher needs additional subject knowledge and skill to improve the delivery of the subject content.

## **FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION REPORT**

A follow-up inspection report is essential in the sense that it seeks to assess the extent to which progress has been made towards the implementation of the major recommendations and actions from the previous inspection.

It is a way of ensuring that schools do implement whatever recommendations and actions inspectors have made on any aspect of the school where improvement is needed.

### **Activity 3b**

You have been requested to conduct a subject inspection at SADC Junior Secondary School. The subject of focus is mathematics in Form Three or Grade Ten because results from the previous year indicate poor performance in the subject.

Develop a checklist of the issues you would like to cover during your inspection.

In your experience, have you ever written a subject-based inspection report?

What elements did you have to report on?

How do they compare to what has been given in this unit?

## **COMMENT**

It is assumed that as a serving inspector, you have written reports before. Now let us take time to consider the significance of report writing.

- A report provides comprehensive information to the stakeholders on the standards, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system.
- It acts as evidence by providing a record that can be referred to for future or further actions.
- It is a feedback mechanism.
- It serves as a staff development and evaluation instrument.

It is therefore a fundamental document for curriculum developers, planners and any other educationists to use or refer to, in improving, modifying or reforming the education system as a whole.

## **FORMAT**

Inspection reports follow certain formats. The suggested format in this sub-unit is meant to provide a broad framework of the main features of a report.

In some cases, inspection reports are written on proformas provided. However, inspectors are at liberty to write and report in their own styles provided they stay within the main framework of report writing.

It is important to stress the necessity for uniformity and adequate reporting procedures because this will provide easy and accurate information to the stakeholders.

The suggested format is as follows:

- Executive summary which summarises the main findings and key issues and actions that require immediate attention or implementation. The executive

summary should always be at the beginning of the report. It should be noted that the executive summary is a product of the conclusions and recommendations from the report, highlighting key areas and issues for easy reference by the user.

### ***Example of an executive summary***

#### **Record of the evidence based on an inspection**

The team comprised six inspectors. During the week, 72 lessons, five assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities were inspected. All full-time teachers were seen teaching at least once and many of them several times. All the available written work of a sample of three pupils from each class was inspected, as well as the work of many other students, in the course of lesson observation. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection.

#### **Main Findings**

The school provides a good education for its students. Standards achieved in lessons are mostly satisfactory or better, and results in public examinations are broadly in line with national averages.

Teaching is good overall. Students show sound motivation and respond well to the experiences provided. The pace at which some students work does not, however, always match expectations of the teachers. Homework is set in some classes but not others. There is some inconsistency in marking pupils' work. The school is well led by a senior management team. The school is not generously resourced and there are some shortcomings in accommodation, especially for physical education and games.

The school plays an important part in the community and sets high standards of social responsibility for its students. Although not explicitly stated in its aims and objectives, it is committed to students' spiritual development and enables them to take advantage of cultural development activities.

#### **Key Issues for Action**

The school board, head and staff are already reviewing many aspects of the life and work of the school. The matters which the inspection team identifies as key issues for action, represent consolidation and extension of work already begun. Develop a school homework policy for implementation by all classes. Review policy and practice for the marking of students' work across all classes.

- Introduction is mainly concerned with outlining the aims and objectives of the report. It highlights the parameters and context within which the information in the report will be obtained.
- Main text is where information collected is structured, streamlined and contextualised to create a logical order. It should provide detailed information gathered during the inspection. It must contain correct and accurate data.
- Conclusion(s) bring together the threads of an argument previously gone through. It is an attempt to consolidate ideas that may have been used in the report at different points. Conclusions can easily be referred to as 'summary' except that they do not provide for any recommendations or suggestions for future action.
- Recommendations suggest steps that can be taken to improve or remedy a situation. They suggest action to be taken by individuals depending on the nature of the situation. They should be realistic, achievable and emanate from the inspection results.

## LANGUAGE

As indicated earlier, inspection reports target a variety of people among whom are parents and educational authorities. It is therefore important for inspectors to ensure that the report is written in clear, simple, concise and user friendly language. Avoid excessive, detailed amounts of information unless it is considered vital to the writer's argument.

It is advisable to avoid too much detail since that might complicate the report.

### Activity 3c

Using an old inspection report from a previous school visit, go through it and suggest ways in which it could be improved.

## COMMENT

Reports are written to communicate specific information on a situation being investigated. It is important that they are clear to all readers. Concentration on a balanced analysis and description of the situation should be observed.

Inspection reports, particularly, should indicate the educational standards achieved by the learners and examine issues which impact on the standards and quality. They should therefore use everyday language and avoid unnecessary jargon and ungrammatical sentences.

It is advisable to use examples drawn from evidence in order to make generalisations understandable, and to illustrate what is meant by good or poor practice. The writer should employ words and phrases that enhance the quality of the report and convey the individual character of the school.

*Example:* The atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils were seen to be working quietly in classrooms and movement around the school was orderly at all times.

## SUMMARY

The following key elements have been addressed in this unit:

- That inspection reports present information which is needed by a particular person or organisation, using objective investigation and listing findings based on concrete evidence.
- That there are four main types of reports that inspectors are required to write but that the styles and layout of these reports may differ depending on the issue or situation being investigated. The types are:
  - (a) Full (Panel) Inspection Report
  - (b) Management and Administration Report
  - (c) Subject Report
  - (d) Short/Follow-up Report
- That formats of inspection reports generally follow the following:
  - Executive Summary
  - Introduction
  - Main Text
  - Conclusions
  - Recommendations

That language should be clear, simple, concise and user-friendly.

## REFLECTION

Look back and review your work on report writing

Do you think you can produce an effective, precise and constructive report on any given educational situation?

## REFERENCES

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