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**Stress Among ELT Teachers: A Study of Performance  
Evaluation from a Private Secondary School in Haryana**

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**Abstract**

The study examines aspects of C.B.S.E. inspection and school based supervision meant for ELT teachers as carried out at a private school in Haryana. Data were gathered from administrators, teachers and students through interviews, critical incidents and relevant documentation. The study points out that a combination of the two supervision systems offers benefits that a single system cannot. It highlights the problems and the dilemma ELT teachers find themselves in when faced with two systems of summative nature. The study concludes that C.B.S.E. inspection and SBS can co-exist. They must be a foil for each other and not copy functions.

**Keywords:** *SBS*(School based supervision); *ELT*(English Language teaching); *C.B.S.E.*(Central Board of Secondary Education); *Haryana*(A state in India).

**Introduction**

It is a never ending quest to provide quality education that meets student's and society's needs while balancing educator's professional needs within finite monetary constraints. In a country like India where English is a second language, much more is expected from Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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ELT teachers in a private school. Teacher accountability, centralized and decentralized teacher's inspection, school based supervision (SBS), site based supervision, administrative control, professional control, community control and comprehensive control are some of the measures to check ELT teacher's potential.

In recent years, educational systems of various countries have experimented with different methodologies in an attempt to optimize an ELT teacher performance (English is second Language of communication in these countries). SBS (School based supervision) has become the most important inspection system to assess an ELT teacher where English is not a native language.

The centralized system relies on inspection by which inspectors, drawn from the country's senior teaching staff, visit schools, observe classes. They gather inspection data and evaluate teacher performance. But in school based supervision, inspection is held at regular intervals. Time period for inspection in SBS may vary from interval ranging from a week to fifteen days mostly. Control of curriculum, teaching methodology, teacher assessment, and even finance remains in the control of localized government or management of the school.

As ELT teachers, we are subjected to whichever system our legislative or administrative body dictates. For most part, we are not important to change the system and therefore bound to make the best of the system imposed. Regardless of whatever system is applied, a method of ELT teacher evaluation is necessary. However, teacher appraisal systems should be directed towards improvement and not termination.

### **Indian Private School System and ELT Teacher**

As is most countries, one of secondary education's prime goal is to prepare students for entry into universities and defense forces and other such powerful organizations, Indian schools are no different. ELT teachers direct their energy to prepare students for group discussion, declamation and English language aptitude test which have become mandatory to enter some of the above mentioned organizations.

There is prime difference between teacher in the public and private school system. The public school ELT teachers are part of the civil service branch of Indian government, and, once accepted, there is little likelihood of dismissal, whereas private school ELT teachers are hired on yearly contracts that require more credentials and greater performance levels.

As English has become the most preferable Language in Indian society for growth, stakeholders in a private school have imposed higher demand for improved ELT teacher performance, therefore, the 'school-based supervision system' has been enacted by school stake-holders to update and maintain the quality of teachers. Within this process

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organizational members, such as the principals and/or departmental heads, have assumed the responsibility for evaluating teachers.

To sum up, ELT teachers at private schools are responsible for the C.B.S.E. to maintain professional accreditation and to the school administration to keep their school position.

### **The Focus of This Case Study**

This case study was conducted at one private school to review the effectiveness and impact of those systems only on ELT teachers. The following research questions were imposed as the basis of the study:

1. How is C.B.S.E. inspection and SBS of ELT teachers perceived by the administrators, department assistant head, ELT teachers and students in terms of weaknesses and strengths?
2. What impact do these systems have on the teaching and learning process, teacher development and overall school improvement?

### **Methodology**

Case study methods and procedures were used in research. The participants were

- Members of the administrative board (2);
- The principal;
- All assistant heads(2) and department heads (1);
- ELT teachers (12)
- Students (100 out of 2500 approximately)

Three qualitative data collection techniques, namely interview, critical incident and the related document review were used. Each interview schedule consisted of twenty questions reviewing the perceptions and impacts of C.B.S.E. inspection of ELT teachers and SBS.

Moreover, the principal and teachers were asked to transcribe their thoughts regarding ELT what they considered successful and unsuccessful supervisory experiences on a critical incident' form. All document related to ELT teacher performance evaluation like school documents, including desired aims from an ELT teacher, school prospectus, ELT teacher diary, school based training programs, administrative documents and student's instructor evaluation form, were reviewed.

Data were subjected to 'content analysis' to explore the patterns of perception and the school's supervisory process and practices. The data were labeled using descriptive codes

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to simplify the complexity and then sorted into manageable units. The patterns were identified based on these labels and were assimilated into broader categories. The major topics and themes helped identify the concepts and central ideas. The data gathered through critical incidents were analyzed in the same manner. Documents archival records, physical and cultural artifacts were used to validate support and explore the qualitative data.

## **Results**

### ***Effectiveness of C.B.S.E. inspection and school-based supervision meant for ELT teachers***

***C.B.S.E. inspection of ELT teachers.*** Even though legislatively mandated, C.B.S.E. inspection was criticized by the interview subjects regarding the inspector quality and the nature of the processes. ELT teachers considered inspectors as perfectionist, judgmental and incompetent. Inspectors were considered domineering. It is stated that rather than evaluation, the review turned from the teacher's qualifications to inspector's discussing their own qualifications and experiences.

Teachers contended that inspectors dominated discussions and even interfered with lessons in progress. ELT teachers also stated that inspectors were prejudiced due to information given then by the principal before the evaluation. ELT teachers contended that inspectors did not have a constructive attitude; one teacher stated:

***Most of the inspectors are not qualified ELT senior teachers. They don't know about the real level of English in Haryana and type of the students in classes. Inspectors will only find faults according to their own strange notions about ELT teachers in Haryana.***

Further, inspectors were cited as being 'incompetent' regarding subject matter and their inspection ability. Teachers stated that inspectors showed little knowledge of current ELT teaching practices and methods, and did not follow universally accepted inspection procedures. One teacher explained:

***There should be an efficient feedback to improve the system. After getting job of an inspector, they rarely care for this. They find only faults. Inspectors do not place any effort on improving the system.***

***Inspection process.*** Regarding the nature of C.B.S.E. inspection of ELT teachers, the process was viewed as biased, rather than formative. The numbers however, are against the inspectors. There are not enough inspectors meant for inspection review. If an inspector is meant for inspection of ELT teachers, it may be possible, not only possible

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but happens also that he will be inspecting teachers of others subjects also of which he is having little knowledge and vice versa. Sometimes it also happens, an inspector recruited for the inspection of other subject teacher than English will inspect English teachers as additional responsibility given to him by C.B.S.E. One teacher emphasized:

*The inspectors rarely judge the natural context. They observe each teacher once or twice during his professional tenure. Evaluation is done with minimal observation.*

ELT teachers contended that they are judged on certain traits, characteristics, styles or behaviors only important to C.B.S.E. C.B.S.E. stresses particularly on four skills to be developed by an ELT teacher which are reading writing listening and speaking. C.B.S.E. hardly gives training to ELT teachers for developing these skills. Most of ELT teachers thought that appointment of these inspectors is influenced by political preferences and not competency.

Along these lines, the study indicated that teachers did not believe in the current inspection. They contended that inspectors had based teacher evaluation according to their own political preferences, although it is C.B.S.E.'s written policy that inspectors should not be biased by political or religious affiliations and judgments should be made solely on teacher performance. The teachers also believed the C.B.S.E. inspection to be subjective due to ill-defined written criteria. They also felt that greater priority is placed on the required paper work, rather than in class performance.

### **School based supervision system meant for ELT teachers**

The data reveal that SBS system was considered necessary by the respondents for various reasons. First, serving in a private school, the administration felt obliged to respond to high parental expectations. English is a global language. Multinational companies require excellent communication skills. It results in high expectations from ELT teachers. Similarly, teachers agreed that management, in order to satisfy the expectation of the parents, should recruit qualified ELT teachers. Even with the common agreement on the necessity for an SBS system most subjects expressed the following concerns.

#### ***Lack of purpose in teacher evaluation***

ELT Teachers stressed that the school does not have a clear written teacher evaluation policy. They contended that lack of clarity created discord between the principal and teachers over the perception of the evaluation of ELT teachers. The principal admitted that the primary goal of the teacher evaluation was to improve English teaching quality by 'weeding out' those ELT teachers who offer little or no future for school benefit.

The teachers saw the system as being ‘intrusive’, appropriate only for administrative purposes, such as contract renewal, and not at all formative. ELT teachers complained that there was no ‘standard criterion’ as to who was to be used during the evaluation, what was to be evaluated and what kind of instruments were to be used during evaluation. However, the principal did not view lack of standard criteria as a weakness since ‘even the C.B.S.E. does not have consistent written criteria’.

### ***Poorly performed class observation***

All ELT teachers mentioned that class performance observation did not conform to the pre-observation, observation and post-observation stages. ELT teachers complained that they were passive participants in the evaluation system. They contended that the principal determines when visits will be conducted without their consultation, and mentioned that there was always an element of stress and over reaction by both students and teachers during the observation. The principal’s presence caused teachers to take a centre stage approach in order to demonstrate or act out their expected behavior. It is the common belief that the principal’s intrusive monitoring and physical presence modified the setting and resulted in false impressions.

In contrast, the principal perceived his unstructured class observation as an opportunity to see the natural atmosphere of the class. The principal felt that, if informed beforehand, the ELT teacher would place extra effect on the lesson.

### **Students’ Perspective**

From the students’ perspective, they didn’t count these visits either as strength or a weakness since it made little difference whether the principal came announced or unannounced; they felt that they had to behave themselves in either situation. The ELT teacher, as they saw it, will treat them based on their performance and behavior during visit. Therefore, senior students indicated that it is inevitable that both their teachers and they themselves change their behavior in a positive manner during visits, whereas juniors saw their teachers as respected figures and were more uncomfortable during the principal observation. All teachers and students said that the principal didn’t stay longer to have a contextual understanding.

### ***Lack of feedback and reinforcement***

The overall teacher perception of feedback is that ‘if the principal is satisfied with the teacher’s performance, no feedback is offered’. However, teachers did not approve the ‘no problem, no feedback’ approach, some even saw this attitude as insulting. They stated that even effective ELT teachers wanted their performance to be recognized and reinforced by the administration.

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In general, the data reveal that there is no written feedback, but only some form of verbal feedback. The principal argued that as long there is minimal verbal feedback, there is no need to show a written document to the teachers. It was his belief that when people are presented their weak points in written form they become disappointed and their positive attitude and performance decrease. Contrary to this, all ELT teachers expect individual verbal and written feedback, rather than anonymous examples.

### **Contract Renewal**

From the data it appears that contract renewal is the only reinforcement for the ELT teachers. Teachers explained that during this time their frustration is extremely high. The administration renews the contracts in April, and if a teacher's contract is not renewed, they have difficulty in securing another position. The data show that the attitude towards teacher evaluation and follow-up decisions on contract renewal causes uneasiness and 'invisible' competition among teachers. ELT teachers stated that attitude towards the evaluation system could become so negative and emotional that nothing positive was achieved for the teachers or the instructional process.

#### ***Lack of student and parent input into the evaluation process.***

Teachers accept student involvement in the ELT evaluation process. However, the students' objectivity is of concern to the teachers. They contended the student's maturity level did not permit objective evaluation, and further, that the 'student's instructor evaluation questionnaire', administered by a school counselor on an annual basis, had inadequate format and content ELT teachers' evaluation.

Even students agreed that this questionnaire was poorly designed. They believed that they could evaluate teachers in terms of subjective matter knowledge and class effectiveness. However, their concerns were different from those of the teachers. First, some students worried about potential negative treatment from the ELT teachers if they honestly responded to the questions. Secondly, they believed neither the counselors nor the teachers took the forms particularly seriously, and indicated that even if they tried to evaluate their ELT teachers objectively, nothing would change, and they were not informed regarding results.

Parental involvement is seen by the administration and staff only to occur when parents have a problem with a particular teacher and, therefore, lend little basis to these periodic assessments.

#### ***Impact of these systems on ELT teaching and learning context, ELT teacher development and overall school improvement as far as English is concerned.***

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Most ELT teachers content that C.B.S.E. inspector has little or no impact on the teaching and learning context. They resented this inspection and viewed it as non-academic, a hindrance. Inspection reports, however, do in some instances have positive results. The principal stated that these reports, though administrative, acknowledge individual ELT teacher performance.

This acknowledgement is shown by issuance of letters of outstanding performance; the school recognizes these letters as an achievement on teacher's part and gives credit for having received such documents during contract renewal. This inspection is concerned with administrative side of the school, and therefore as contended by the teachers, did not add significantly to their improvement. C.B.S.E. inspection is meant to improve and maintain minimal educational levels, it failed to foster a program leading to competent teacher improvement.

### **School Based Supervisory Practices**

In terms of the school based supervisory practices, ELT teachers believed the school procedures did not exemplify good methodology. The diversity of opinions on this issue result from various views on the purpose of supervision and the role assigned to the supervisor. Teachers contended that the supervisory practices are only an administrative assessment identifying weak ELT teachers and making only personal decisions.

The current ELT teacher supervision is viewed by the teachers as having a negative impact due to its 'summative' nature. They pointed out that the system causes fear of dismissal, frustration and unneeded competition among teachers. Some teachers expressed the opinion that good teachers maintain their own quality attributes without control and that this self control is part of being a professional.

The teachers and some of the administrators concluded that supervisory practices create tension and unhappiness among most teachers, and felt that these practices are useless. However, there is a group of teachers who believed these impacts, ultimately and surprisingly, could lead to a positive impact on teacher development and school improvement; teacher development relates closely to the level of a given teacher's personal desire to enhance their personal and professional maturity.

The teachers stated that, based on the fear of dismissal, the 'professional' development is the teacher's desire for enrichment of knowledge, improved teaching techniques and awareness of improved opportunities.

All respondents agreed that: 'improvement in ELT teaching and learning processes with quality ELT teachers will inevitably lead to overall school improvement'. Because of its

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private status the school must maintain a strong staff in terms of their subject knowledge, with a positive teaching attitude and commitment to school improvement. It is the common feeling that if the ELT teachers are strong in a particular school, then that school will attract more students, and that, in turn, the school's administration earns more profit and can provide more benefits to the ELT teachers, which results in added improvements in the school. This is a constructive cycle.

## **Discussion**

When comparing centralized and school based supervision systems, it is apparent that each system has both strengths and weaknesses. The literature suggests that a combination of 'internal self evaluation' and 'external inspection' tends to be more effective than a mono-inspection method, so long as they do not duplicate each others function. The private school sector has implemented its own 'supplemented inspection' to meet market demands of results oriented stakeholders. The private school sector has shown, statistically, higher university entrance rates when compared to public schools.

The school's administration expounded one goal as to focus on instructional improvement of ELT teachers; however, supervision's prime aim is to rid the organization of incompetent ELT teachers due to competition from other private schools. Neither C.B.S.E. nor the school gives feedback to ELT teachers. They pass judgment to keep a teacher in stress as methods of assessment are not clear.

Unfortunately, the coalescence of the two systems, with its double-edged sword effect, fails to provide any developmental feedback. Neither goes any further than checking the necessary managerial feedback and using the system to maintain institutional control. Both supervision systems are founded on negative reinforcement.

The ELT teachers are compelled to compete for a place in the school, even without incentives and merit pay have been passed over in favor of threats and dismissal. All of these motivators lead to stress and fear among staff. These fears manifest in teachers undertaking self-improvement is an effort to assure continued employment. Even the mere fact of inspection raises anxiety levels which may lead to physical and emotional problems.

## **Recommendations**

This study recommends that a modified system be implemented as a pilot study in a portion of the private schools sector (Figure 1). It would be one that will meet the mandated central inspection system and grasped the benefits of the SBS ELT Evaluation system.

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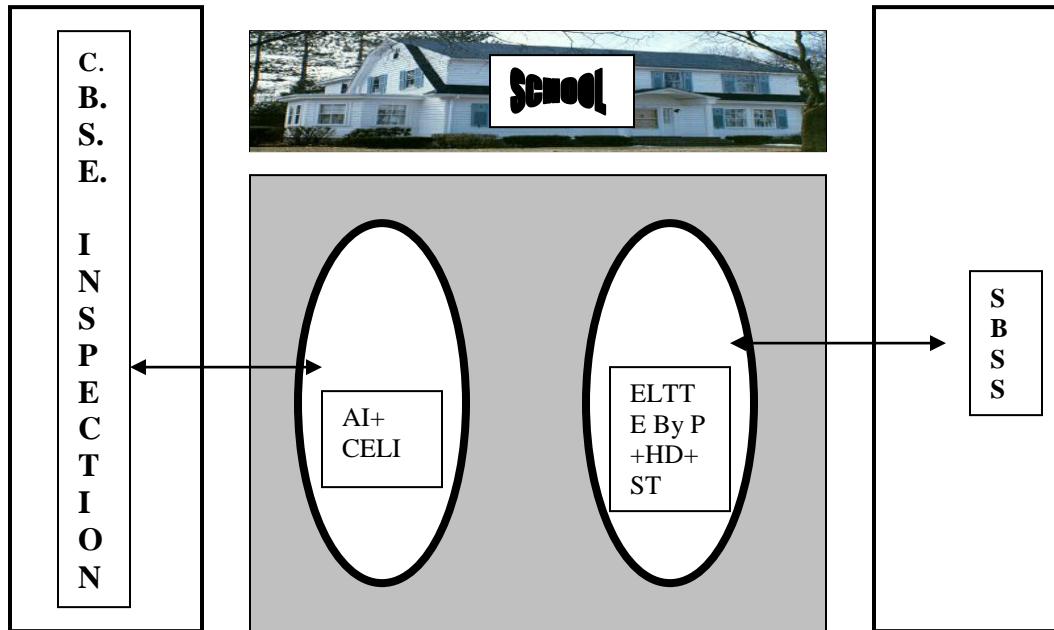
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C.B.S.E. ELT evaluators should continue to conduct its inspection of schools' from its administration viewpoint and also institute a program through which head of the departments should be trained and certified as ELT evaluators by C.B.S.E. in modern ELT techniques and evaluation methods.

The schools must perform their own evaluations. Based on these evaluations, the school would then undertake a program to address the individual needs of ELT teachers and school development.



**Figure 1** . Combination of C.B.S.E. inspection and SBSS (**AI** = administrative inspection; **CELI** = certification of English language inspector at school (senior ELT teacher); **ELTTE** = English language teacher's evaluation; **P** = principal; **HD** = head of the department; **ST** = senior teacher of English language; **SBSS** = school based supervision system)

The evaluators of English teachers would be better equipped to tailor inspection schedules, have intimate knowledge of their teachers and provide comprehensive reports listing teacher strengths and weaknesses based on effective teacher literature. These reports may be used by the school to implement a program of teaching methods for ELT teachers. The reports would be shared with the teachers, to address their concerns over 'no problem / no feedback'. Senior teachers from the same department who would be subjecting knowledgeable as inspectors may supplement the principal who is chief

evaluators of every teacher in bringing clear picture of teacher performance evaluation reports.

Further, the developmental approach would provide the school with the opportunity to shape its own direction and offer the ELT teachers a feeling of accomplishment and advancement. Supervision would have direct involvement in shaping, skills and teaching methods that were deemed most effective to their specific system. This holistic approach could be tailored to provide time-based 'snapshots' of the existing system, while allowing local analysis of specific performance, progress and achievement for future reference.

If the pilot study was found effective, the C.B.S.E. could use the model as a carry over to the remaining private schools, thereby relieving some of the imbalanced mix of inspectors to teachers. This, in essence, would bring the whole school system up to a higher level from ELT point of view which is need of the hour in rural schools. By doing so nationwide, data and national performance, based on university entrance, could be gauged and local needs addressed. As in other countries, the quality of those who inspect in India would be raised, their techniques and methodology improved.

## **Conclusion**

The need for an ELT operating SBS in all schools is important for quality education. Even if no more than a monitor, its presence assures that there is an authority to which educational activities are accountable. The key, however, is the balance by which the ELT supervision system attains the goals set for the individual school. A balanced system is certainly desirable, if equilibrium is to be achieved when uniting to divergent methodologies such as the centralized and decentralized inspections.

In order to complement each other, one of the two systems cannot duplicate the other. The C.B.S.E. ELT evaluation system is a mandated system and hard to changes, whereas school-based systems are a creation of change school under both the centralized and decentralized tracts must have a vision and political determination to set high goals for themselves and be willing to make those changes which benefit students, as well as teachers.

Changing the educational policies of a country is a difficult process. India is no exception to this case, and is not at the stage where drastic shifts in both social and political mentalities regarding ELT education can be readily assimilated into the existing bureaucratic system. If the C.B.S.E. is based on summative policy for ELT, then the SBS should assume a quasi formative policy. By doing so, a balance may be achieved and, ultimately, the working system has the best of both the worlds.

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