

SICI INSPECTION AND INNOVATION PROJECT

Background Paper for Bratislava Workshop

Rationale

Inspection has been an important and established part of the education systems of many European countries stretching back to the early nineteenth century. The precise nature and purpose of inspection reflects the traditions and policies of each country and can range from a focus on compliance with legal and policy requirements through to approaches which are more directed to improvement and capacity building. The object of the inspection process also varies from, on the one hand, the teacher being the key actor through to approaches which centre on the school and its overall effectiveness. In recent years, partly as a reflection of the emergence of international comparative performance data such as the OECD's PISA assessments, there has been a re-examination of the role which inspection can and should play in raising achievement.

These developments in inspection should also be set against transformational changes in economies, societies and global relationships partly driven by technological innovation on an unprecedented scale. The forces which are shaping twenty-first century economies and societies also pose significant and sustained challenges for school education. Technological advances are changing fundamentally the nature of both work and leisure and contributing to societal shifts already affected by migration and demographic change. The skills required of the twenty-first century workforce are changing and increasingly associated with the creative use of technology. Far from being immune to such forces, education lies at the heart of any response to this challenging context. Twenty-first century teachers must help to equip future generations to thrive in an environment of fast, continuous and fundamental change and must themselves capitalise on potentially far-reaching implications for teaching and learning.

At the same time, across the world, there has been a growing acceptance of the importance of school education for individual and collective wellbeing, social cohesion and economic success. The politics of education have moved to centre stage and many governments now promote the kind of innovations in education which they believe will give the country competitive advantage and meet the twenty-first century needs and challenges of their citizens.

SICI has been considering these movements over a number of years and has a particular interest in assisting members' understanding of the implications for their work. In particular, it recognises the need to examine the interplay between inspection and innovation, taking account of differing traditions and governmental policies. Members have mounted a series of workshops over the last couple of years on these themes and SICI is now seeking to draw together the results of these meetings at a major workshop in Bratislava in June with a view to presenting a position paper to the General Assembly in October 2013.

Purpose and Format of Bratislava Workshop

The workshop's deliberations will be supported by a paper prepared by Professor Graham Donaldson, its former President. The aim of the paper will be to analyse the contextual factors and research evidence and to pose questions to the workshop participants as a means of structuring

discussion. Issues such as the relationship between innovation and quality, the management of risk, the role of teachers, and accountability dilemmas will be covered.

The structure of the workshop should include stimulating thought pieces through selective inputs on the key themes of innovation, inspection and self-evaluation. Speakers might include someone from The OECD Future Learning Project. However, the majority of the time will be spent in groups focusing on key questions posed by the paper.

The output should be clear indications of ways forward and issues to be considered. There can be no blueprint given the varying positions of inspections across members but clear indications of issues to be considered and possible implications should assist policy debate in each jurisdiction.

Attendance

It will be important to have representation from the main inspection traditions at the workshop and that might suggest a combination of direct invitations to participate in addition to the usual an open invitation to members.