

SICI NEWSLETTER

The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates

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EDITORIAL



According to the decision of the Executive Committee every issue of the SICI Newsletter focuses on one of the member organisations and contains general information about its changes, developments and recent challenges. Newsletter 31 and 32 placed emphasis on the current situation of inspection in Germany and on the supervision of education in the Netherlands.

Today's Newsletter focuses on the educational system and the inspection in Sweden, the host of this year's General Assembly. Gunilla Olsson describes the development in the Swedish pre-school and school system. She also gives reference to possible new directions and developments in the wake of the election of September 2006 with changes in the Swedish Government.

The general assembly held in Stockholm (Sweden) in October 2006 was a good opportunity to link the regular work of the organisation with school visits to give an impression on the Swedish school system to the participants. The Newsletter gives an overview of the topics of the General Assembly and presents brief reports on the school visits as well as the speech held by Claude Thélot about the future of common learning in France.

Information was given and decisions were made during the meeting in topics as there are:

- Blue Book
- Consequences for the organisation from the SICI strategy paper
- New SICI Website
- SICI workshops
- Virtual European Inspectorates' Academy

More information about this is to be found on SICI website. With the help of the European School Net (EUN) SICI will get a new Website. This issue gives information about this new communication platform and its possibilities.

Pawla Polechowá and Gisele Dessieux this year left the Executive Committee. The General Assembly elected as new members Pétr Drabek (Czech Republik) and Ángel Ónega (Spain).

The Austrian inspectorate offered a meeting on the Quality of leadership. The report on this very successful workshop held in Graz will be continued in the next newsletter by the report on the follow up in Linz.

And there is the calendar of SICI activities (events, workshops, meetings etc.)

Heinz Kipp
Editor

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NEWS IN THE SWEDISH PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOLSYSTEM

In Sweden, after the elections in September 2006, a new Prime Minister and new ministers took over after 12 years of social-democrat government. The present Government includes four parties: moderates, liberals, centre and Christian democrats. According to the first declarations, the Government intends to strengthen evaluation and inspection in the school system. Each school must be evaluated at least every three years, which is twice as frequent as today. The overall objectives are to focus on the achievement of knowledge and skills necessary for future studies and professional career. The Government wants to strengthen the role of the pre-school; to assure that all children will learn to read, to write and mathematics; to start evaluating the pupil's learning from an earlier age than today; to improve the working climate in the schools; to offer more choice according to individual ability; to enhance the possibility to choose school, to encourage schools to profile their education; to see to it that municipal and independent schools have the same conditions; to strengthen the role of the head teacher/principal.

The Government declares that knowledge is at the heart of education and resources must be allocated where best needed. The present national objectives for the learning, formulated in the curricula and syllabuses, ought to be revised and made more clear and comprehensible. The progressive learning must be assessed at regular intervals (school years 3, 5, 8, 9). The present grading system must be analysed and reformed, grades will be given from an earlier age than today (which is in the 8th school year in compulsory school). A reform in upper secondary education will be prepared and implemented; the overall structure will be changed into three clear, main orientations: academic programs, vocational programs and apprenticeship. Only the academic programs will prepare for academic studies, while vocational programs will not give general qualifications for university (which is the case today), unless the student makes special choices for relevant, additional courses. Special qualifications may become necessary for admission to upper secondary programs.

From 2007 onwards, the Government also suggests to Parliament that, in the national budget, considerable sums of money be earmarked for the teachers' professional development.

Changes for the inspection

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central national authority for following up, evaluating and assuring quality within the sector. In the election campaign the four parties in the present Government declared that the number of national agencies must be reduced. The National Agency for School Improvement, an agency introduced by the previous government as late as in 2003 in order to clarify the roles of evaluation and control on the one hand and of support for improvement on the other hand remains as well – so far. Important changes in the National Governance are expected

to follow in the years to come. Decisions about the Education Act will be taken as well as about other constitutional laws. Such changes may also affect the responsibilities of the state, the national agencies, the municipalities and the county councils.

At present the Government declares that the municipalities/local authorities and the schools are responsible for developing, assuring and assessing the quality of their offer. All schools, municipal pre-schools and leisure time centres and the municipalities shall regularly (each year) account for the quality and results in quality reports.

As for the national inspection, the results and reports must be comparable and published. The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) will be given rights by

A report

from

Gunilla Olsson





law to impose sanctions if a school does not correct deficiencies.

The National Agency for Education has started the planning. Preparations for fulfilling the new directives will continue next year and a new framework and 3-year cycle of

inspections will be applied from 2008.

Background

Inspectors were appointed by the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) for the first time already around 1860. Their mission was to check on the local parishes way of setting up primary schools (folkskola). Compulsory schooling for all had been introduced in 1842. Different inspection systems had been applied up till the reform in 1990 when the "whole" responsibility for the economy, administration, organisation and implementation of the national goals and objectives was decentralised from the state. The National Board of Education was abolished and instead a new central authority was set up, the National Agency for Education. The existing staff of inspectors working within the National Board of Education and the regional (state) inspectors had to leave. Instead of "inspection" more systematic statistical follow-up and studies of specific issues were introduced, the latter called "evaluation" and to a limited extent "supervision" which aimed at assessing whether the municipality and independent schools operated in compliance to regulations. Towards the end of the 1990s the claims for more supervision grew more intense and also demands for state inspection and stress on accountability for the "producers" of education or

other kinds of public service.

Even though many, not least the teachers and researchers in the pedagogical field, were opposed to the concept and phenomenon of inspection, a kind of tryouts called quality reviews were

introduced from 1998, by Skolverket (the National Agency for Education), but by directives from the (social democrat) Government. The responsible staff were called inspectors of education and the experiences together with experiences and learning from other countries led to the inspection "model", the framework used from 1993.

The fact that many were doubtful or against the reintroduction of inspection in 2003 and the speed of the introduction made it natural to follow up and assess the quality and the impact of inspection, as soon as it had started. The task was commissioned another national agency, the Swedish National Financial Management Authority (ESV). The study was based on questionnaires to all municipalities with experiences from inspection and case studies of the inspection procedures. The report was published in January 2006. The results were mainly positive. For example, 63 % of the respondents (local political or administrative management or head teachers) thought that the inspection will have long term effects; more than 80 % had /started/ improvement measures in accordance with the inspection judgements, as well as having rectified all that had been judged as against regulations. Two thirds thought the inspection focus is right and as many judged the inspection had been carried out with good quality. 90 percent of the respondents meant that the report gave a fair picture or a partly fair picture of the operations.

A conclusion in the ESV report was that the teachers are those least positive to the inspection. Even though the inspectors had revealed serious failures and observed what needed to be improved, it was not always new or unknown areas that had been revealed. Now that the inspection pointed at it, the school got an incentive really to do something! Many respondents were positive to somebody coming from outside and to having somebody to discuss with, especially since the inspectors were considered to be professional and competent in school issues.

The present framework

The present inspection framework and procedures have been applied for only three and a half years. It was planned for a six year cycle of inspection in each school, which means that half of the schools will be inspected by the end of



this year. Reports from more than 3 000 schools are available from the web (<http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/224>). Next summer inspection in the three biggest cities, Malmö, Göteborg, Stockholm, will be concluded.

The basis for the regular inspection is a municipality and its responsibility for the local activities within the pre-school and school sector. Independent schools within the geographical area are inspected during the same period but reported separately. An inspection team is appointed to be responsible for a municipality. The number of inspectors in the team varies, mainly according to the number of schools but also e.g. depending on the distances between the schools. Each inspection ends with a report, one for each school and one for the municipality. In the formal concluding document Skolverket requires measures to be taken by the municipality (or the independent school) or recommends improvements in specific areas. The municipality (or the independent school) has to report back after three months what measures have been taken and after two years there is a new contact either by letter or by a new visit. At both opportunities Skolverket assesses the effects of the inspection.

The framework comprises indicators within three main areas and a number of "sub-areas": *Results* (attainment of knowledge, norms and values); *Operations* (work climate, teaching activities, administration, quality system); *Resources* (staff, educational materials, resource allocation). The "education" is the issue, not specific subjects. To gather information for assessing the quality of the local system the inspectors use both statistical data from national and local sources and information from interviews and observations on site. Local quality reports are of importance – but not yet always as informative as needed. An electronic questionnaire has been developed by which the inspectors, for each school or municipality, judge the quality in accordance with the indicators and criteria on a 4-graded scale. This allows for overall, quantitative information about the standards of many schools. To the extent an indicator stays the same over the years, there is also a possibility to follow the developments over time.

Ways to develop the present model for inspection

For some time the main question was how to reduce the framework and adjust the procedures in order to cover the 6 000 schools in six years, since the staff and resources seemed too limited in relation to the task. Could some areas or aspects be left out? Could some schools be left out? Could a school judged "good" in the first scanning of the available information about it be evaluated more "lightly", while schools "at risk" would be more carefully evaluated? Could the reports be reduced, computerized or even omitted? Could the statistical information, gathered separately by the National Statistics from the municipalities and the schools, be organised more efficiently and combined automatically? Could cross-analyses be made or indexes be developed? Could new statistical analyses be made, to help inspectors find the crucial information about school results? A development work has started in order to improve the statistical follow-up data and make it more useful both for the national and local level. Analyses called SALSA are in place, making it possible to see if a school with pupils in the 9th school year performs above or below what can be statistically calculated, considering some of the pupils' characteristics (gender, foreign background, mother's level of education). How could SALSA be further developed?

Some of the problems remain to be solved; others will be of less importance now, since the resources for inspection will increase. Instead other questions arise: How organise the staff? How organise the inspections? Will the evaluation always include a visit to a school? When many new inspectors will be employed, will qualifying courses and systematic training be more necessary?

An important issue when the present model was elabo-



rated was how, in different schools and by different inspectors, to make equivalent and fair judgments of activities or results of comparable quality. That was the reason – inspired by other inspection frameworks – for using a framework with indicators, criteria and a set scale to help describe levels of quality. Maybe there are better means to assure equivalence in the inspection judgements? Will there be more of norm setting and scoring, by help of new instruments? This issue will be all the more important when the stress is on comparability in the reports from different schools. The parents and the students should have reliable bases for their choice. Skolverket will need reliable bases for criticizing when the consequences and sanctions may become more severe than at present.

Another issue when the present model was elaborated was to decide the focus in

the different school forms. The new Government emphasizes achievement of knowledge and skills - results, but less focus on teaching and other processes. So far, measures or methods remain to be developed, to assess learning results in the different subjects, other than in Swedish, English and mathematics in the 5th and the 9th school year and in upper secondary schools with the national tests. And the interest remains, in the new context, in methods to identify schools at risk and what the risks actually are, since it will be necessary, among other reasons, to prove what effects inspection has.

So, the challenge for next year is to modify – or to renew – the present framework, procedures and methods. ♦

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VISIT TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: HÖGALIDSSKOLAN

STOCKHOLM, 5 October 2006

A Group of four Czech and Dutch inspectors has visited the Högalidsskolan Secondary School in the center of the city. The school has been established in 1921 and currently has about 850 pupils aged 6 to 16.

The headteacher Sven-Erik Tunerholt holds office for 16 years and is chairman of the Headteachers' Association in Stockholm at the same time. That is why he has an excellent possibility of comparing and has a wide view of events at Swedish schools.

Preliminary he has introduced his school to the visitors as well as manifested the Swedish education system. His school



provides education from pre-school age till secondary school age and is specialized in ballet, table tennis, dance, figure skating and gymnastic. This is why children from whole Stockholm and Sweden as well as from number of countries all over the world gather there, which is noticeable especially in the ballet class where pupils practise 6 times a week and perform e.g. in the Stockholm Opera.



What has held visitors' interest the most and what is different in the Swedish education system from the Dutch or Czech one?

➤ Primarily absolute gratuitousness of everything concerning education (that is not only textbooks and tools for pupils of all age and all school types but also free food, entrances to cultural or sport events, organisation of excursions, transport to these excursions, snacks for interested pupils and their parents...

➤ The school has found out that pupils talk with 41 languages as native languages

➤ The school as well as the Swedish system carry out regular testing of pupils' knowledge in maths, Swedish language and English language

➤ A Swedish child gets first „real“ marks in the third grade at the earliest, that is at age of 9; the kid is assessed only verbally until then

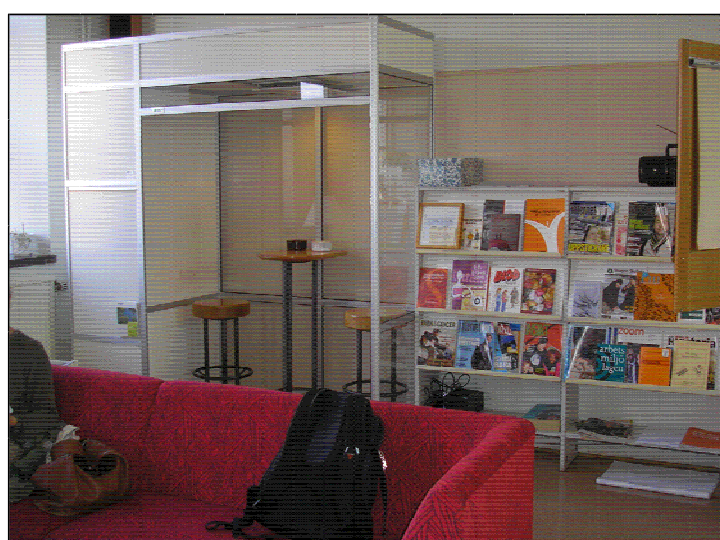
➤ In 1995 all state schools have come over to „wings“ of cities and municipalities according to the new act; the headteacher sees this unambiguously as

advantage; the state has kept the possibility of contributing and moving money to poorer municipalities than e.g. capital city is

➤ Children have been calm at school with interest in visitors; their reactions (irrespective of age) have been natural, in English language

➤ What have inspectors liked the most?: glassed-in smoke-room in the staffroom and headteacher's tie with pictures of Tweety

The Swedish education system is different from the Czech or Dutch one in many respects but all of them have one in common: the most important education component – pupil – is in the center of the school happening. ♦



A report from

*Péťr Drabek
(CZ)*

VISIT TO PRIMARY SCHOOL: TULLGÅRDSSKOLAN

STOCKHOLM, 5 October 2006

A report from

Lachlan Mac Callum

Tullgårdsskolan is a grundskola (primary school) of some 350 pupils, aged 6-12 years serving at the south eastern part of Södermalm, a relatively advantaged area of Stockholm. The visiting party of SICI inspectors was shown great courtesy and hospitality on the part of the school staff and pupils. The visit was highly successful and led to a very helpful exchange of views between the school staff led by the Head teacher Kerstin Boussard and the SICI members. One of the first and strongest impressions was of the high quality of the learning environment for pupils and working environment for staff. The school was modern and exceptionally well resourced and decorated. The facilities included pleasant modern classrooms, a gymnasium, a library, a handcraft room and a metalwork and woodwork room. The school atmosphere was very relaxed and democratic, both on the part of staff and pupils. There was little sense of hierarchy.

teacher as the equivalent of a nursery nurse and a leisure teacher;

Teachers had a high degree of individual responsibility for the definition of curricular programmes and assessment. The school was participating in a local project with staff in three adjacent primaries, involving the moderation of curricula and assessment standards through group meetings in every subject are ever three to four weeks. The school was represented at each by a designated member of staff with responsibility for particular subject who fed back to the other staff on the planning, good practice and assessment issues which were discussed the staff felt the project to be very successful.

The quality of the teaching seen was good with relaxed teacher pupil relationships. The principal did not monitor the quality of learning and teaching formally, but knew the school well. Staff were moving towards a system of peer observation to share good practice. There was a significant range of pupil progress in the classes. Pupils with additional needs including autistic pupils included in the class. There was a flexible approach to teaching by staff with additional lessons for slower learners in English and Swedish instead of other activities. There was a high expectation that pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions in class. high degree of expectation that pupils take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils were confident and friendly and in one class presented a small role-play to the visiting inspectors, which they had produced themselves. There was limited use of information and communications technology in the classes observed, but good access to a well equipped ICT suite. Pupils were very confident and showed high levels of communicative skill in English and Swedish

The school was also very well staffed with promoted staff and full time teachers of physical education, handcraft, music and technical subjects.

Pastoral care was well organised. Staff and pupils in the primary school operated on the basis of four units or "hemvist" - essentially stage related units for pastoral care, planning and teamworking among staff, and the equivalent of a house system. Staffing in each hemvist included a pre-school trained

The primary school was aware of a forthcoming area inspection by Skolverket, scheduled for December, but seemed relaxed and was not letting the prospect deflect them from the ongoing work of learning and teaching! The school had been inspected by the Stockholm city inspectorate some three years ago but inspection per se was not seen as the main driver for school improvement. ♦

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Klasslärare: Anita
NO: Heléne V.
Idrott: Esbjörn J.
Musik: Rosie B.
TX-slöjd: Maria L.
TM-slöjd: Owe N.

(alla pass med X)



VISIT TO UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL: SÖDRA LATINS GYMNASIUM

STOCKHOLM, 5 October 2006

The school was established in 1654. The impressive red brick building dates back to 1891 but was renewed 10 years ago. Present enrollment in the three grades is 957 students (65% female). Teaching staff comprises 100 people, the non-teaching staff 20. (nurses, student counselors, social counselor, etc.) The school offers three out of the 17 national programmes:

- Natural sciences
- Social sciences
- Arts

Specially designed programmes in music which is geared to students residing not only in Stockholm.

The goals and frameworks for teaching and learning are defined by Parliament while the local board produces educational plans for funding, organisation, development and evaluation. The school head draws up a local working plan based on curricula, national objectives and an educational plan. There is much freedom left for the individual school and the individual student which is much appreciated but can lead to difficulties when changing schools.

Each programme guarantees 2180 teaching hours and comprises 2500 school points, which are necessary for commencement.

Aside from a fixed number of core subjects (Swedish, English, Maths, Physical Education, Civics, Religion, Sciences, Artistic Studies), the students can choose all the other subjects according to their interests and abilities. They carry approximately 25 lessons per week.

Grades are awarded on three levels: Pass, Pass with distinction, Pass with special distinction.

There is no final exam, but university entrance is based on these grades.

The school receives a global budget. As education is absolutely free of charge, the school has to pay not only for all books, but also for lunch and any activities including student exchanges with foreign countries.

The maximum number of stu-

dents in class is 32.

Foreign languages: English, French, German, Italian, Chinese.

The school year begins in the middle of August, comprises 194 working days for teachers, 178 for students, and ends around June 10th.

The school has recently introduced an attendance system, where absentees are immediately shown on the homepage of the school. Parents make frequent use of this roll check on their children.

On enrollment all students are tested in Swedish, English and Maths for grouping them according to their special needs and support on the one hand and their talents on the other hand. ♦



A report from

Henrike

Kschwendt-Michel

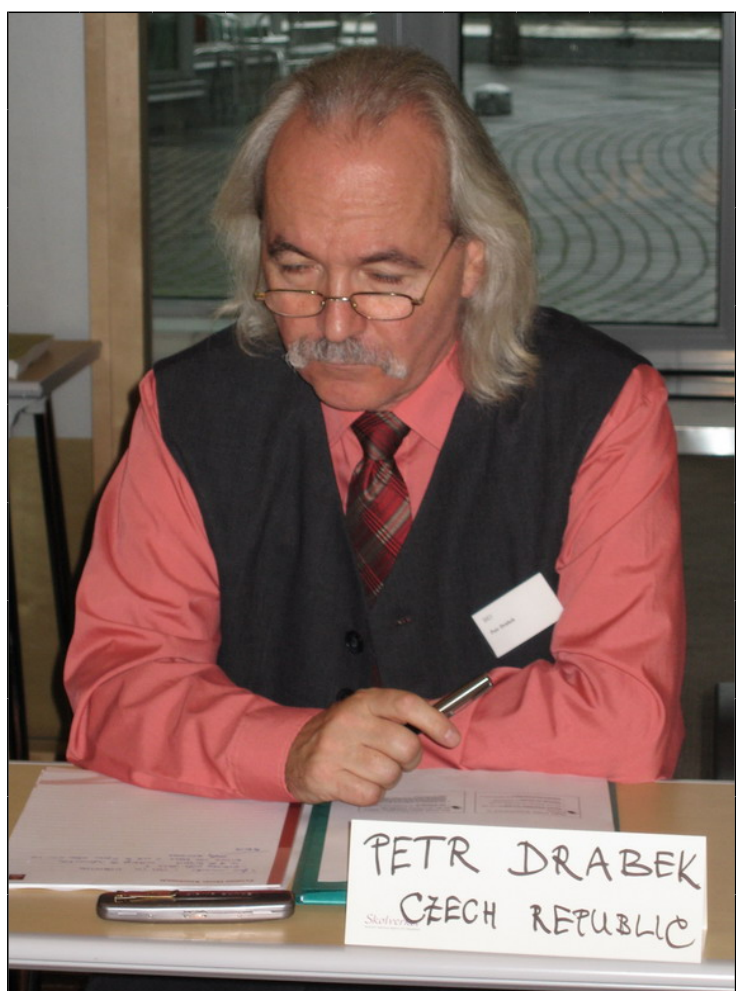


WHAT ABOUT THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND CZECH SCHOOL INSPECTORATE?

I have been hesitating a long time whether to respond or not but then I have decided not to keep things without an answer.

In Newsletter No 31 Herbert Schnell has written a nice reflection on origin and establishment of SICI on its 10th anniversary. Since I fall within “founder fathers”, I keep little incorrectnesses nonetheless, nevertheless I cannot overskip a fundamental one. In order to avoid further possible contingent mistakes, I have taken a file “Dillingen, Bavaria, October 16-18, 1995”, where I have, among others, found following.

Representatives of 12 European inspectorates have participated at the foundation conference but only eight of them can be considered real founders as they have fulfilled defined requirements for membership in the following period, which has also included official written permission on statutes of rising organization as well as payment of obligatory membership contribution defined at that time for 2,000 US dollars. First members were then Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Denmark, Bavaria, Netherlands and the Czech Republic, or more precisely, the Czech School Inspectorate. Two little things are worth of remark. You can find Denmark among founders of international professional organization of inspectorates, although it has been always basing on fact that there is no inspectorate itself in that country. Another remarkableness is the fact that the Czech Republic



has been the first and only postsocialistic country for long that has been regular SICI member. I have a personal memory of how this situation has turned up.

The Czech ex-deputy of the Minister of Education has met his Bavarian colleague in Paris about one month before performance of the SICI foundation meeting in Dillingen. During the talk the Bavarian colleague has announced that they have been arranging “something” for inspectors. And so the Czech ex-deputy has replied with: “So you could invite us too, couldn’t you?”. Thanks to modesty of the Bavarian deputy and namely Georg Knauss who has been the chairman of Schools Committee of the Board of Ministers of Education, we have reached the invitation.

A letter from Petr Drabek as reaction on Herbert Schnell’s article on the history of SICI

(SICI Newsletter No 31 page 3)

I have a lively memory image of the conference where I have had to repeatedly defend and explain why the Czech Republic should and why others not and why the Czech Republic at all. Thanks to people as German Georg Knauss, Scotsman Walter Beveridge, John Singh from England and especially my long-time friend Dutchman Johann van Bruggen, I have managed to. It is suitable to mention that one of the unanimously approved final decisions has referred to provisional suspension of accepting other postsocialistic countries into SICI as they have not been EU member states.

The fact that membership of the Czech Republic has not been only formal is reflected by a fact I would like to mention below. It has been the Czech School Inspectorate, that has organized first two SICI workshops in November 1996 and June 1997. Both of them have been dedicated to determination of mathematics level at high schools. It has been at the time when there have been no Revised Guidelines on hosting the SICI workshops, which you can nowadays find on the SICI website, there has been no e-mail, everything has been faxed and phoned.

Here I need not have said another memory.

I have lead both workshops even though I am not a mathematician and it has gone well. Well, my colleagues, mathematicians, have not complained. The problem has turned up at the moment when general "tapping all over" and information transmission have stumbled at the question whether a null is a nonnegative number or not. The discussion has been busy, nervousness has been rising and one participant has stemmed it by constatation: "It is clear; a null is a nonnegative number because our Minister of Education has said so...". At that moment I have once for all understood that I have had nothing to do there anymore. It has been fundamental contribution of the Dutchman Wim Klein, who has undertaken and finalized the first common SICI project after few years, in which preliminary Czech workshops have been strained to a successful end.

I apologize to Herbert Schnell and please not to take my article as a polemic or even disagreement but as a specification and completion on the organization anniversary, in its gains, uniqueness and helpfulness I am deeply convinced. ♦

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4 October 2006

MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN STOCKHOLM



THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Yvan Verbauwhede, Heinz Kipp, Paul Schattemann, Ferry de Rijcke, Henrike Kschendt-Michel, Ángel Ónega, Pétr Drabek
(left to right)

Tim Key (not on photo)

AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

6 / 7 October 2006

The General Assembly has in October 2006 decided on priorities for the coming years. These priorities are:

- Professional development of inspectors
- Improvements in access and use of data
- Risk analysis as basis for inspection arrangements
- Impact of inspection
- Quality of inspection
- Joint inspections with other inspectorates

More in general, efforts will be focused on strengthening partnerships with other organisations and on realising comparative studies.

At the General Assembly in October 2006 the Secretary General has provided information on the financial procedures and on the accounts. The GA has agreed to the arrangements made and has approved the presented accounts. The Secretary General has prepared a budget for the year 2006, which was approved by the EC and the GA.

A set of internal rules on decision-making and other facets has been adopted by the GA. It was agreed that this set of rules should be subject to adjustment, as future situations require.

Henrike Kschwendt has taken over the workshops' coordination from Pavla Polechova.

In 2005/2006 Workshops have been organised on:

- ESSE (Copenhagen)
- Early Years Education (Belfast)
- Social Inclusion (Poitiers)
- Communication Strategies (Haarlem)
- Internal Quality Assurance (How good is our inspectorate?) (Leuven, Bad Nauheim)
- Innovation and inspection (The Hague)
- Leadership (Graz, Linz)

All workshops will be reported on the SICI website and (with abstract) in the SICI Newsletter.

In order to ensure proper attention for crucial tasks and to achieve a more balanced distribution of workload, primary responsibilities have been allocated:

◆ Overall strategy	Ferry de Rijcke
◆ Blue book	Ferry de Rijcke
◆ Partnerships	Ferry de Rijcke
◆ Deputy Chair	Paul Schatteman
◆ Finances	Paul Schatteman
◆ Support staff	Yvan Verbauwheide
◆ Webmaster	Allan Ryan
◆ Editor Newsletter	Heinz Kipp
◆ Communication	Heinz Kipp
◆ Statutes	Ferry de Rijcke
◆ Workshops' co-ordinator	Henrike Kschwendt
◆ Membership issues	Tim Key and Paul Schatteman
◆ INSIGHT development	Tim Key

All SICI members have designated liaisons and correspondents for SICI-matters in each country. Tasks: regular contact, contribute information on national developments, contributions to the Newsletter. Separate liaisons have been designated for the production of the digital "Blue Book". The secretariat has provided updated lists and will do so whenever changes are made. They will be available on the new SICI website.

The GA has elected Pétr Drabek and Ángel Ónega as new members of the EC.

The next General Assembly is planned for 3, 4 and 5 October 2007 in Bruges, Flanders. ◆



*Speech held on the
general assembly of
SICI by*

Claude Thélot

*Stockholm,
7 October 2006*

THE FUTURE OF COMMON LEARNING IN FRANCE

France has just launched a very original process - original as far as we are concerned anyway - : designing the content of a common core of learning and endeavouring to have it mastered by all students of the same age group so that they develop the necessary knowledge, working habits and know-how which will ensure them to be able to get a successful further education and to become efficient citizens

We can define three different stages in this process:

- the notion of a common core of learning resulted from a large public debate about education, and it came as a demand from public opinion;
- that demand became a law - which of course is a very political gesture ;
- it is now being implemented in the schools and we have to define under which conditions we can make sure students have got the desired proficiency at the end of compulsory school.

A DEMAND WHICH CAME AS THE CONCLUSION OF A LARGE PUBLIC DEBATE

President Chirac wanted to reform education in depth and in quite a new manner.

In France education is regulated by law (an "orientation law", we call it) and the later one dated back to 1989. So, the first necessary step was to change that law and the government had to write a new education government bill for Parliament to examine and to vote on.

In order to prepare that draft, and that is where the main originality of the project lies, the President wanted to organize a great debate in every part of the country, so that every French person might have their say on school and education. On that basis, an independent committee was to elaborate the new directions which would help improve education.

So we can sum up the process as follows : first a large debate, then recommendations, and last a government bill to be put to the vote.

The Committee worked for 13 months. We had to prepare and then to write the synthesis of the debate (6 months), then to write a report with the recommendations (7 months). The report was sent to the Prime Minister on 12 October 2004 and from that date on the government began to draft the government bill, which was voted by Parliament on 23 April 2005.

I want to insist on the fact that that debate was organized on a very wide scope. It involved all kinds of people, not teachers alone. Education is a key problem which concerns all citizens. More than one million persons gave their opinions on major themes we had defined ; also, in order to prevent misunderstandings we took care to send questionnaires to "mutes", i.e people who are not keen on speaking out.....And then we summarized the whole of it, which was quite a hard job since we had got several hundred thousand pages

Four main expectations have been highlighted:

- The public demand that education deals not only with the transmission of knowledge but also with the **mastering** of knowledge and skills by the students.
- Teaching is not enough : school must **educate** as well i.e teach the children how to live in a group and society at large.
- Families must cooperate with the school and an educational partnership must be established with them.
- The strong link which used to exist between school and nation must be restored.

The Committee's way of planning was very much like an architect's. An architect's challenge is to build a firm strong groundwork ; so, in order to empower the children with the necessary tools, the Committee insisted that, at the end of compulsory school(primary and lower



Among the competencies defined by the government, five are already parts of the present curriculum : mastery of the French language, practising one foreign language, ground knowledge in maths, science and technology, ICT for daily use and "humanities". Two more domains have not been sufficiently taken into account yet : social and civic skills and students' autonomy and initiative.

Those "competencies" may be more or less ambitious...Some words are not too clear and

secondary) the students should be proficient in a common core of skills, knowledge and social behaviour. On the quality of those school years depends the quality of their further and life-long education.

To the Committee's mind that common core must be defined by both Parliament and an independent High Authority. Still, one can easily devise that such common core could include seven basic competencies : French language, one foreign language, ground knowledge in maths, science and technology, ICT for daily use, humanities, social and civic skills, autonomy and initiative. Each one of these "competencies" includes knowledge, skills and attitude. Capability building must be tailored to each student's needs so that he or she may master those essential elements.

It means that a new education policy must be initiated and implemented in the schools.

WHAT DOES THE COMMON CORE INCLUDE ?

Parliament designed the main features of that common core, insisting on the need to evaluate the students' proficiency . They also insisted they were to be informed regularly of the way that policy was being implemented . The government took that advice into account as well as the European Parliament's recommendations concerning the key competencies for life long learning.

have to be defined more precisely ; it is particularly true of such expressions as "culture" or "humanities" and also of "autonomy" or "mastering" or "practise".... So the content of each competency has to be more clearly defined in order to be rightly evaluated, otherwise the desired evaluation of the students' proficiency might well be a delusion.

Let's take two examples :

"READING " means : reading aloud, understanding texts of various kinds, understanding instructions, knowing some grammar, reading literary works (unabridged) etc. All this can be evaluated if it is defined precisely and the Evaluation Department at the Ministry has already provided the teachers with efficient evaluation tools, still it is no easy job...

But let's look at this other example:

"HUMANITIES" include: distinguishing mass cultural produce and fine arts, a sensitive approach to reality, etc .Such a competency involves vague difficult and numerous capabilities, skills and domains of knowledge which it is difficult or even impossible to evaluate fairly and rightly.. So far, no clear definition of the essential requirements has been given.

Defining a common core of basic learning has been a valuable effort though such a goal could not be achieved. We will see under which conditions such a common core can be mastered by all students.

*Speech on the general
assembly of SICI by
Claude Thélot*

*Stockholm,
7 October 2006*

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR HAVING STUDENTS MASTERING THE COMMON CORE ?

To my mind, there are four conditions :

- the common core needs to be defined very precisely (as mentioned before);
- teaching practice must be focused on efficiency ; tailored teaching entails a closer attention to teacher training and to the evaluation of their performances. It also involves changes in the teachers' time-table so that they stay longer in the schools (this is meant especially for teachers at junior school level).

The students must get the help they need from the teacher of course but also possibly from other persons : other teachers, education assistants, volunteers, other students etc. In some instances, especially with low efficiency students, school and parents could enter into a contract. Anyway, the main idea is that the student should receive adequate tutoring and monitoring, a diversified teaching, NOT repeating what has been done already and under the same guise;

- diversifying teaching aids and methods, a new and better organisation of the teaching staff - taking advantage of the numerous present retirements - according to the needs of the schools and districts. Especially designing a new organisation of the Education Priority Zones would be an advantage, having in mind that true equality in quality does not necessarily involves equality of treatment. It involves a better evaluation of the context and of the re-

sults of the schools, a better awareness of their problems and possibilities by the local authorities, and a policy of pluriannual contract between the school, the State and the local authority ;

- making the actual mastery of that basic content the condition for the student to move up to the next school level or cycle. This means teachers will make sure at the very beginning of the school year that they organize the necessary tailoring. So, only the students with a real mastery of that core will be accepted in the next level. So, again, the objectives and skills will have to be clearly defined for each level as well as the evaluation tools for the teachers to evaluate the students. We come back to the necessary conditions we have already defined : changing teacher training and increasing the material means of the schools according to their needs.

XXXXXXXX

THIS IS A CHALLENGE FOR STATESMEN AND A CHALLENGE FOR THE NATION

It is indeed a new difficult and ambitious policy. It needs a strong commitment of the Nation for the future of the younger generations. ♦

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INSPECTORATES' ANNUAL MEETING IN SPAIN: INTERNAL EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS, AN APPROACH.

The Central Inspectorate of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science organized, as in previous years, a three-day international meeting for Inspectors of Education from 18 until 20 October 2006 in Madrid. Ms Mercedes Cabrera Calvo-Sotelo (Spanish Minister of Education) opened the conference. The theme of the meeting was: 'Internal evaluation of schools'. It was presented by Mr José Luis Pérez Iriarte, General Director of Education. Ms Alicia N. Zamora, Chief Inspector at the Spanish Central Inspectorate convened the meeting. Mr Demetrio Fernández (Central Inspector) was the coordinator of the event. The conference was attended by almost 200 inspectors from Spain's autonomous regions as well as from Argentina, Columbia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, France, Portugal and The Netherlands.

The general objective of the meeting was to reflect about social and educational reality of the 21st century, in Spain as well as in Europe and Ibero-America, especially in relation to the need to improve the quality of education through the evaluation of schools in primary, secondary and vocational education.

More specifically, the conference aimed:

- to analyse the systems for internal evaluation of schools used by the educational authorities in various national and regional contexts
- to reflect about the relationship between internal and external evaluation of schools, about improvement plans of schools, about the assessment of the working climate in schools and of the satisfaction of the educational community and about the analysis of the results of the pupils and students
- to analyse the implications of the internal evaluation of schools for the way the inspectorate approaches the schools, given the fact that inspectors are active agents in external evaluation
- to promote the exchange of experience in order to facilitate the use of adequate inspection strategies and improved practices for the supervision of schools



- to cooperate with the Autonomous Communities in providing professional training for inspectors of education to promote relations between the inspectors of education in the Autonomous Communities of Spain and to strengthen their knowledge of systems of inspection in other countries in Latin America and Europe.

During the course of the conference, five lectures were held on issues related to self-evaluation of schools. In addition, there were twelve presentations of experiences with self-evaluation of schools in several Autonomous Communities of Spain and in Latin-America, France and Portugal. The first day of the meeting ended with a round table debate on the role the inspectorate can or should play with respect to internal evaluation of schools.

The Spanish inspectorate had requested the SICI to name someone to present a lecture on 'Internal evaluation of schools in a European context'. Two experts, Ms Mineke Laman and Ms Gonnée van Amelsvoort, of the Dutch inspectorate prepared a contribution in which they highlighted educational tendencies in Europe, the importance of the national evaluation context for internal evaluation by schools, the need for a balance between external and

Ms. Mercedes Cabrera Calvo-Sotelo, Spanish Minister of Education, opens the conference together with

Mr. José Luis Pérez Iriarte (left), General Director of Education, and

Ms. Alicia N. Zamora (right), Chief Inspector at the Spanish Central Inspectorate.

internal evaluation, the role of inspectorates with respect to internal evaluation and the quality of products and processes of internal evaluation by schools in various European countries – all with a view to further strengthen the potential of internal evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. In preparing their presentation they used the findings of several international comparative research projects about internal evaluation and the role of the inspectorate, notably ESSE (*Effective School Self-Evaluation, 2001 – 2003, initiated by SICI*), PROPINT (*Proportional Supervision and School Improvement from an International Perspective, initiated by the Dutch inspectorate and implemented in cooperation with inspectorates from other European countries*) and EQUILIBRIUM (*Study initiated and implemented by the Belgian government*).

Ms Rosa María Collado of the State Council presented a lecture about 'State control in a socio-democratic constitutional State' and the role of the inspectorate of education. Referring to Karl Loewenstein's work on the division of powers, she distinguished three types of power in the contemporary Spanish state: (1) political decision-making, (2) implementation of the decisions taken, and (3) control. The last function is fundamental. It distinguishes the democratic from the totalitarian state. Public Administration in Spain has created a system of internal controls entrusted to specialized institutions such as the inspectorate of education.

In the third lecture, Mr Joaquín Gairín of the University of Barcelona presented the results of research on improvement plans of schools. It was concluded that improvement plans have promoted change in schools, but also that their effectiveness depends on the way they are conceived and developed. Participation by the educational community – school directors, but also teachers, pupils and parents – is an important condition for success in terms of improvements realized. The research-project also found that the degree of satisfaction about the plans was very high among directors and teachers, but quite low where pupils and parents were concerned.

Mr Álvaro Marchesi Ullastres of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid elaborated upon the way in which internal and external evaluation relate to each other. He characterized these two types of evaluation as complementary processes. External evaluation should be as objective and neutral as possible; internal evaluation allows to study certain aspects in depth because the evaluators have good knowledge of the local situation and are in the right position to take account of the socio-economic reality of the school when interpreting the results obtained.

In the fifth and final lecture, Mr Enrique Roca, Director of the Spanish Evaluation Institute, presented the findings of international research projects comparing the results of pupils in a number of countries. Notably, he discussed the outcomes for Spain of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment; OECD) programme and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study; IEA) pro-





gramme. He emphasized that Spanish educational system has achieved important improvements which should not be overlooked. From an international point of view, the results from Spain correspond to its socio-economic and cultural factors/ratings. However he pointed out that Spanish schools reflect the socio-economic effects of the families in a more equitable way than in other countries.

Friday afternoon, the conference was officially closed by Mr Alejandro Tiana, General Secretary of Education of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science. In his speech, he emphasized amongst others the need for Spain to increase the autonomy of its schools in order to enable the schools to respond more effectively to rapidly changing conditions in their surroundings.

This conference turned out to be a useful experience for the inspectorates. It provided a unique opportunity for reflection on internal evaluation by schools. The many reactions to the lectures will help to further enhance the insight into the complex relationships between internal and external evaluation

and their respective roles in improving the quality of teaching and learning in a European context. The presentations of experiences and resulting discussions provided the participants with more understanding of the role of the inspectorate in a country like Spain with its seventeen Autonomous Communities and in Latin-America, Portugal and France. In addition, they resulted in food for thought about issues such as the measurement of the opinion of the educational community about school plans, quality control in public service and the outcomes of international comparative research. ♦

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HOW GOOD IS OUR INSPECTORATE? - FOLLOW UP

*Report of the SICI
workshop held in Bad
Nauheim, Hesse
(Germany)*

*01 – 03 November
2006*

The Leuven workshop (November 2005) – like other activities before – showed the variety of institutions organized in SICI and also showed the variety of approaches used in order to answer the question „How good is our inspectorate?“

The participants shared experiences made on the basis of internal evaluation as well as on an external basis or a combination of both.

The objectives of the Leuven workshop in 2005 - with a focus on the topics Instruments, Fieldwork and Communication - were:

Guarantee the quality of the work of inspectorates:

strategies on a SICI basis.

There is common European interest for example in:

- The promotion of reading competences
- The reduction of the at risk group in general
- The quality of leadership

And there are more challenges to be faced at the moment.

This led to the aims of the workshop:

Increasing and deepening the exchange on the development of the SICI institutions by

- Sharing the knowledge on quality improvement processes within the SICI institutions
- Exchanging experiences on systematic quality assurance gained since Leuven
- Pointing out present common challenges
- Defining strategies on common areas of interest for the SICI members
- Finding solutions and responses for the oncoming work
- Informing the participants on specific Hessian changes in school quality development

In order to achieve these aims, Hesse organised a follow up which offered a combination of reports and presentations in the plenary on the first day and placed emphasis on the exchange of experiences concerning the three topics instruments, fieldwork and communication in smaller groups on day two.

On day three the recently founded IQ (Hesse Institut for Quality Development) took the opportunity to enter the SICI floor by giving an overview of its work.

The report on this workshop will be published in February 2007. The presentations and materials of the workshop will be available on SICI Website.

Heinz Kipp ♦



- by gaining clear insight in the quality of the instruments, procedures and reports
- by exchanging knowledge about systematic quality assurance
- by investigating the impact of internal quality assurance of an inspectorate and the effects on quality assurance in schools

The follow up in Hotel Dolce in Bad Nauheim was planned to identify last year's challenges and responses and to find out if there are common approaches and

In December 2006 SICI is going to launch a new website.
The web address is:

Besides information about the organisation itself, about members, the Newsletter, SICI activities etc. you'll find new functionalities like web communities and areas with restricted access for members only.

For example the EC has agreed to host activities of History Inspectors on the new website. This will serve as a pilot for this kind of service.

- Heinz Kipp, chair
- Henrike Kschwendt-Michel
- Ferry de Rijcke
- Bert Jaap van Oel
- Sweden has been invited to join.

If you have any questions, recommendations or wishes, don't hesitate to contact a member of the Editorial Board. ♦



THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

When the Austrian inspectors for secondary schools visited the Netherlands in November 2005, Dr. Anton Dobart from the Austrian Ministry of Education, an ardent supporter of SICI, and Ferry de Rijcke, Chairman of SICI, agreed upon a joint activity of SICI and the EU presidency. The result was the workshop in Graz, which was listed in the official calendar of the EU presidency.

Participants came from 17 SICI and non-SICI member countries, including colleagues from Romania and Russia. Ferry de Rijcke, Chairman of SICI, chaired the workshop.

Questions that were to be discussed in the course of the workshop:

1. Which factors are decisive for a good school leader?
2. How can we make this knowledge and expertise accessible for other school leaders?
3. What instruments do inspectors need to identify the indicators for good leadership and to assess leadership in school practice?
4. How can we contribute to further development of leadership in schools and its assessment?

Dr. Michael Schratz, professor at the University of Innsbruck, gave a key note speech on "Leadership for Learning", which set the tone for this workshop and provided the participants with both a general overview of what leadership means and some crucial questions on the topic. For the group work on Day 1 the participants gathered in four homogeneous groups (inspectors, school heads, researchers) in order to discuss the first two questions:

1. Which factors are decisive for a good school leader?
2. How can we make this knowledge and expertise accessible for other school leaders?

The main findings of these discussions were listed and then presented to the whole group and to Prof. Schratz in particular, who was asked to respond to them.

The items can be grouped in the following way:

1. Criteria of good school leadership were grouped by the ways in which they can be measured:

- Measure by results of the school
- Measure by conditions for learning
- Measure by personal effectiveness
- Measure by leadership style, communication skills:

2. Decisive factors for success as a school leader were then redefined in terms of personal qualities and in contrast the fatal characteristics of poor school leaders were identified.

3. The workshop then collected suggestions for sharing expertise, organised around examples of formal training, peer learning and drawing from various available sources of expertise.

During day 2, based on the results of the group work of Day 1, five mixed groups then took up the other two questions:

1. What instruments do inspectors need to identify the indicators for good leadership and to assess leadership in school practice?
2. How can we contribute to further development of leadership in schools and its assessment?

Again, lists of indicators and suggestions to further development of leadership were established.

They concentrated on methodological issues (conceptualization, types of research, types of school evaluation, instruments and methods) and on possible contributions to further development both of leadership and of its assessment.

The workshop has brought results in the following areas:

- An overview: criteria of good leadership
- Awareness of the importance of two categories of 'context' for leadership:
 - the school and the personal biography of the school leader
 - Examples of inspectorates' practices

*Report of the SICI
workshop held in*

Graz, Austria,

29 and 30 May 2006

in assessment of leadership

- Examples of professional development of school leaders
- Desiderata for the future.

Next objectives for the participating inspectorates will be:

- Defining and comparing responsibilities and accountability in school systems
- Benchmarks for good leadership, shared by inspectorates
- Co-operative evaluation of professional development
- Development of a shared instrument for school leader assessment.

Next steps will be

- Report of the workshop
- Exchange of documentation
- There will be a web community: Invitation will be sent out to all to join and contribute. Immediate feed back from participants showed the importance of joint work of inspectors, researchers

and heads on this topic and the exchange of experience in the respective fields of education.

- Follow-up SICI workshop in Austria (October). At this workshop (October 23–24, 2006 in Linz, Upper Austria) the findings of Graz will be the starting point. It is desirable that many participants of the Graz workshop attend the follow up workshop as well.
- Project proposal and exploration of funding options (December)
- Go – No Go decision for international SICI project (Spring 2007) ♦

Henrike Kschwendt-Michel

Ferry de Rijcke

Evelyn Thornton

SICI CALENDAR 2007

Date		Activity	Location
MARCH	14	1 st Meeting of Executive Committee	Prague
MARCH	15–16	Joint Conference Czech-Scottish Partnership	Prague
MARCH	29–30	“Promoting a culture of inclusion in early childhood services, including education, for 0-7 years old: the role of inspection and regulation.”	London
JUNE	28	2 nd Meeting of Executive Committee	Brussels
OCTOBER	2	3 rd Meeting of Executive Committee	Bruges
OCTOBER	3–5	General Assembly	Bruges
NOVEMBER	13–14	“Profiling inspectors for the new challenges”	Portugal



An organisation of 22 members drawn from across Europe, working together to improve their understanding of education and inspection.

The current members are:

Austria, Bavaria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Walloon, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eire, England, France, Hessen, Luxembourg, Macedonia (Associate member), Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Northrhine-Westphalia, Portugal, Saxony, Scotland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Wales (Associate member).

New web address !!!
www.sici-inspectorates.org

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