

SICI REVIEW 2008

The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates

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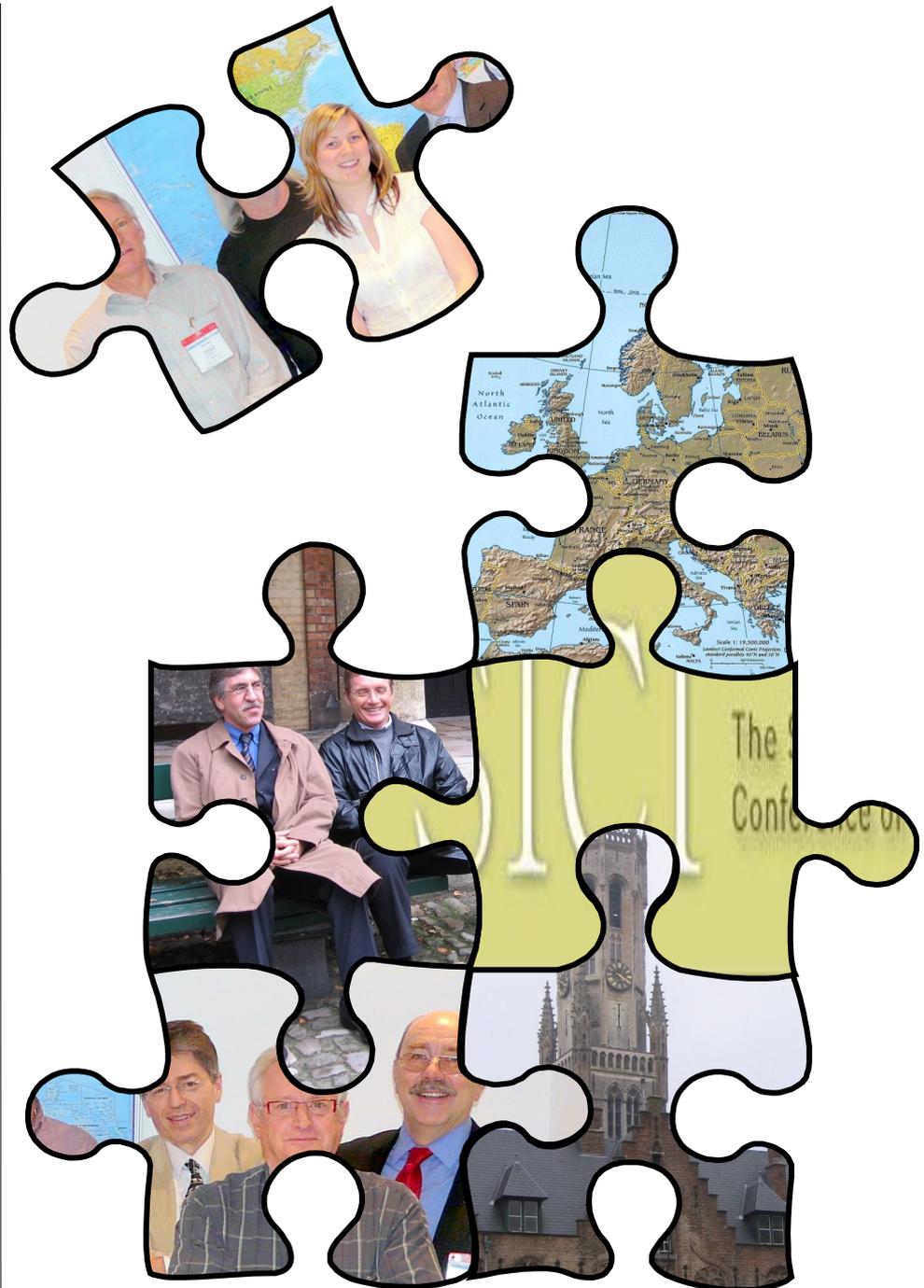
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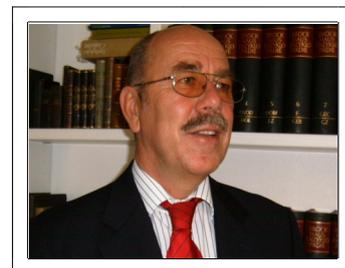


left to right:

- **Yvan Verbauwhede** (Flanders)
- **Péτρ Drabek** (Czech Republic)
- **Vivien Watt** (Webmaster, Scotland)
- **Franz Kappelmüller** (Austria)
- **Tim Key** (England)
- **Ferry de Rijcke** (President, The Netherlands)
- **Roger-François Gauthier** (France)
- **Paul Schatteman** (Secretary General, Flanders)
- **Heinz Kipp** (Hessen)

SICI Review 2008

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FOREWORD OF THE PRESIDENT

What defines an inspectorate of education? SICI, the organisation of education inspectorates in Europe, is faced with this question every time an institution presents itself to become a new member. We have come to use a broad definition: inspectorates are public organisations whose core business is the assessment of quality of education. Both this common denominator and the variety of their actual roles and responsibilities makes it worth while for them to cooperate. As a consequence, one of the main functions of SICI is professional development of inspectors and inspectorates by organising workshops, facilitating collaborative projects and promoting all kinds of exchanges of experience and expertise.

In the last years, SICI and its members have added another ambition, namely to

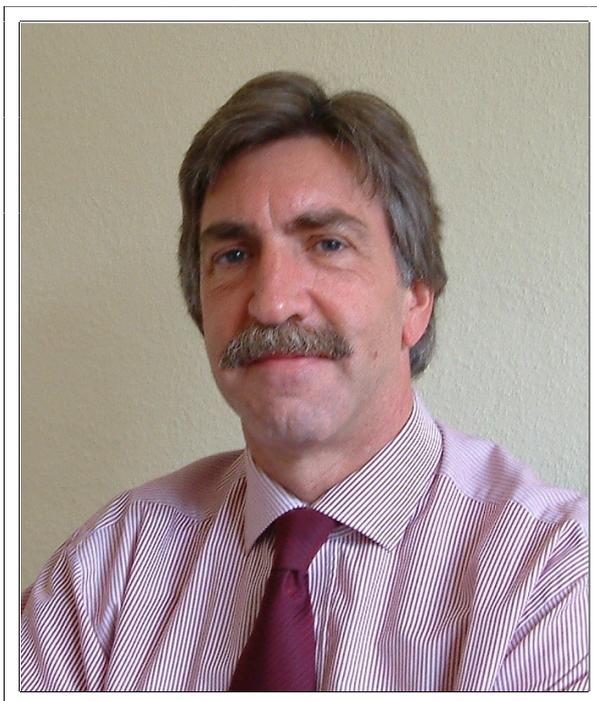
contribute to the debates on education matters in Europe. The knowledge and insights available within inspectorates can be more widely profited from through European projects and conferences as well as, for instance, by offering training to new members of the European Union.

In this Review, which we plan to publish annually, aspects of the work of SICI are presented.

Updated information can be found at www.sici-inspectorates.org.

I hope that readers of this review find reasons to get in touch with us, for mutual benefit. ♦

Ferry de Rijcke
President



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN BRUGES (BELGIUM)

INTRODUCTION

The General Assembly (GA) of SICI was held on 4 and 5 October 2007. Ferry de Rijcke, President of SICI chaired the meeting which was attended by 12 chief-inspectors, 36 inspectors and 5 EC members, representing 21 SICI members and 2 guest speakers, Dirk van Damme, principal private secretary of the Flemish Minister of Education and Ben Jensen Head of Indicators and Analysis Division at the OECD.

*A report from
Paul Schatteman*



Paul Schatteman, Secretary-General presented and commented the GA report of Stockholm of October 2006, the income and expenditure account and balance sheet 2006, the budget 2007 and an overview concerning the memberships.

Ferry de Rijcke presented an update of the strategic choices that the EC has made in previous meetings. He indicated that for 2008 SICI was going

to pursue 3 strategies:

Strategy for Inspection to the enhancement of the Quality of Education, Professional development of Inspection, including a Virtual Academy and Risk analysis as basis for Inspection, including the Access and Use of Data. He also gave an overview of the most important actions that the EC is focussing on. Website, Workshops, Blue Book, P2V, Presidency Conference on School Education were commented by different EC members.

Ben Jensen, Head of Indicators and Analysis Division at the OECD gave an extensive presentation how OECD is using data and quality indicators from the individual member countries and to put these data and indicators in an international perspective.

Roger-François Gauthier (France) and Franz Kappelmueller (Austria) were

elected as new EC Members. Ferry de Rijcke, Paul Schatteman, Yvan Verbauwhede, Petr Drábek, Heinz Kipp and Tim Key were re-elected.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

In his official opening of the General Assembly Dirk Van Damme explained that the Quality of Education is a social challenge with key focus on the achievement of set objectives. Quality education imparts knowledge, skills and attitudes on pupils which enhance their personal development, cultural enrichment, emancipation and sense of public responsibility. However, quality education should not be merely understood as quality of the end product, but also brings the quality of the process to the fore. In this approach, educational quality refers to the extent to which the provided education achieves the targets it sets itself or which are formulated for education by external parties.

Upon his entry into office the Minister stated the following in his policy memorandum: "Our education policy will thus consist not so much in pursuing an equal opportunities policy in addition to many other priorities, but in making equal opportunities the guiding principle in all aspects of policy." Therefore it goes without saying that the steering and management of this ambition is directly linked to the supervisory role of the government.

Quality of education is more and more to be considered as a challenge to schools, as indicated by Michael Fullan: "Improvement and accountability can be effectively interwoven". The key question is how schools can organise their own policy and practice so as to be able to provide quality education to all pupils. A school's ability to pursue policy is not a goal in itself. It always contributes towards optimising the learning of the children. The quality and effectiveness of policy strength or the policy-pursuing ability of schools constitute an important dynamics to achieve quality education. We consider the school head to be - without a doubt - the key figure in the learning and improvement process. He or she does not create the policy-pursuing ability as a solo player, but on the other hand steers and keeps on course the strategic

and educational policy in a coherent and systematic way in interaction with different educational actors. He or she is also a key figure in the HR and financial policy.

Experiences of the inspectorate itself as well as scientific research show that there is a clear connection between the achievement of the set educational targets and a school's policy strength. External supervision by a government should, however, not result in the school team becoming less professional or the learning experiences of pupils being reduced. The reason for this is that the growth potential of teachers and school teams is larger in schools with great policy strength. A school that uses its autonomy to the fullest succeeds better in achieving quality education. In most European countries this external supervision is entrusted to the education inspectorate whom operates either as fully integrated body or in close connection with the educational administration. It is our belief that external supervision should be considered as a contribution towards an emphatic educational policy: informing, stimulating, adjusting/steering.

The independent action of inspectorates should therefore not be confused with isolated autonomy with regard to official policy choices. The strength of a strong inspectorate lies in the ability of its message towards both policymakers and the educational field (schools) itself. Therefore an efficient inspectorate presupposes professionalism and targeted supervision. More than ever inspectors will have to be able to analyse data and to coordinate inspections with systematically updated data. As a result, the inspector profile will develop from the generalist who reaches judgments on the basis of his intuition and specific expertise into the professional who reaches a stimulating final judgment on the basis of data analysis and target-oriented, in-depth investigations on site. In this way the inspectorate will help to refine insights into educational mechanisms and into the performance of the provided education. This must enable policymakers to transpose its social ambitions into even better adapted policy options.



THE FUTURE OF INSPECTION IN EUROPE

Representatives of Scotland, Graham Donald, Romania, Serban Iosifescu, Portugal Alexander Ventura and Denmark, Bo Kjems gave their view on the future of inspection in their respective countries.

Dirk Van Damme commented their views by indicating that the position of General Inspectorates needs to be reviewed as their autonomy is very high. He also stated that the quality

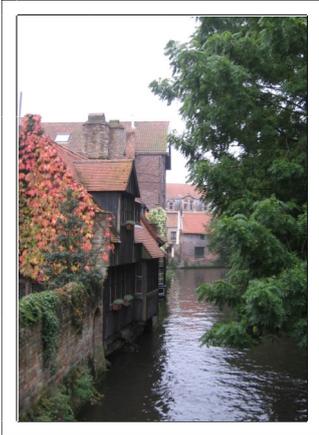
of inspectorates should be enhanced and their policy capacity needs to be increased. He also feels that Chief-Inspectors should step into more dialogue with schools. As school autonomy has still a very high negative image schools and government should not be spitted. Inspectorates should also focus more on the outcome indicators, but also look at processes and input. Inspection is a part of the quality improvement. General testing is also necessary. We need to know where do schools stand and about the learning outcome of pupils in a more general framework.

Training and recruitment programmes of inspectors should focus on the core competences of inspectors, their intrinsic knowledge and make them more aware regarding the importance of data and risk analysis.

Inspection reports should be published, regardless of whether they are positive or critical towards the schools involved. These reports should be published on the website due to the public nature of the government. A first positive effect of these decisions will be an improvement of the quality of the documents used.

The panel discussion following these comments concentrated on different issues.





The publication of reports was on the whole considered positive, but is in many countries still a sensitive issue. It is expected that school management will react better in the future. This will also result in a positive effect on the position of inspectors. The panel members expect that Inspectorates will base their judgements more and more on observation and investigation, and use reports from others. Also

International sources such as OECD reports should be used more often.

Policymakers should be more influenced by their stakeholders. The expectations of

stake holders as well as the remits of inspectorates differ considerably. A typical example fore instance is Romania which uses the terms of controlling and evaluating, Scotland evaluating and improving. There is a great need to continuously discuss the implications of these differences. ◆



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NEW SICI MEMBERS: ROMANIA ...

THE ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE ON PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (RAQAPE) is a Public institution of national interest working under The Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth with legal personality and own budget, working in compliance with the Law no.87/2006 on quality of education.



The main tasks of RAQAPE are:

- Elaborates the standards, the reference standards and the performance indicators, the regulations for the institutional evaluation and accreditation, the manual of internal quality evaluation, the guides of good practices, the annual report considering its own activity, the system analyses concerning quality on Romanian pre-university level of education, recommendations for improving the quality of education at pre-university level, the professional code of conduct for the experts in evaluation and accreditation;
- Accomplishes the evaluation for authorization and accreditation for all educational organizations at pre-university level;
- Accomplishes, every three years, the recurrent evaluation of the accredited educational organizations;
- Recommend to The Ministry of Education and Research the authorization and the accreditation of educational institutions, for each level of education, study program or professional qualification;

- Accomplishes, on a contractual bases, at the Ministry of Education and Research request, the evaluation of the quality of pre-university education system;
- Accomplishes the quality monitoring and control, together with the School Inspectorates and the departments of the Ministry of Education and Research;
- Publishes the results of the external evaluation.

Our permanent challenges are:

- a) To certify the capacity of the school units to meet the customers' expectations as well as the quality standards;
- b) To ensure the protection of the key and the consequent customers of the study programs, by producing and disseminating information about quality education;
- c) To play a role in the development of a "culture of quality" in pre-university education organizations;
- d) To recommend to the Ministry of Education and Research policies and strategies in order to improve the quality of education. ◆

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... AND ESTONIA ...

Since the year 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research established an internal evaluation obligation in pre-primary institutions, general education institutions and vocational schools and changed the organisation of state supervision.

The aim of the changes was to support the creation of internal quality insurance systems in educational institutions. This signifies an important shift in approach: instead of regularly checking educational institutions and thereby collecting information for education policy decision-making, educational institutions are directed towards self-analysis of their activities.

The objective of internal evaluation is to ensure conditions that support children's development and a consistent development of the educational institution by identifying the strengths and issues of improvement as regards the activities of the institution, according to which an action plan for implementation of the development plan will be developed. On the basis of this objective, analysis of education and schooling activities and management, and evaluation of their effectiveness will be carried out.

The criteria of internal evaluation (leadership and management, personnel management, cooperation with interest groups, resource management, the education and schooling process; results related to a child/student, personnel and interest groups and statistics of the educational institution) have been stipulated by a regulation of the Minister of Education and Research. The methods for carrying out internal evaluation are chosen by the educational institution.

In order to successfully implement internal evaluation, state counselling is guaranteed to educational institutions. In the National Examination and Qualification Centre administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, an educational institutions' external evaluation department was established in 2005, in future organizing and coordinating also the activities of counsellors. The purpose of counselling is to enhance the objectiveness of evaluation and deepen educational institutions' awareness of their actual situation, offer necessary additional information for comparison, support and develop the conduct of internal evaluation and the development of evaluation readiness and evaluation culture.

Complex supervision, which used to be carried out after every 6 years, is no longer conducted in preprimary institutions and general education institutions. At the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research, supervision will be conducted regarding individual issues and be based primarily on the priorities of state supervision. The Ministry of Education and Research will be managing the supervision procedures, supervision will be conducted by the Ministry or by county governments. The rearrangements will ensure the direct managing role of the Ministry of Education and Research in organising state supervision. Related to the above-mentioned changes, the ministry's monitoring department was renamed as external evaluation department in 2007, as its scope of administration is broader than the supervision of schools' activities. ♦

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...AND RHINELAND-PALATINATE

Introduction about the AQS

As one element of a new policy to enhance quality in school education the regional parliament of Rhineland-Palatinate decided in summer 2005 to establish a new public agency, which provides services of external evaluation for public schools. In February 2006 the „Agency for quality assurance, evaluation and school autonomy“ – German: „Agentur für Qualitätssicherung, Selbstständigkeit und Evaluation von Schulen“ (abbreviated: AQS) was created in Mainz.

AQS has the exclusive mandate to carry out external evaluations for 1600 public schools in Rhineland-Palatinate. Established as a public agency, the AQS reports directly to the president of the implementing authority of school supervision in Trier (abbreviated: ADD). Today the AQS consists of a team of twenty evaluators. Their task is to contact and carry out evaluation -visits at schools and present evaluation results. The evaluators are experienced headmasters or seconded school supervisors from Rhineland Palatinate. In addition the AQS works with a team for analysis of school data and information that is supported by a public-private association of the University of Trier. The AQS works also with a team for public relations and administration.

The AQS concept of external evaluation focuses on lesson quality, on quality in school management, organisation, education processes and it considers input and output data of schools. Since 2006 the AQS concept of external evaluation has been field-tested with 50 pilot-schools in Rhineland Palatinate. The evaluation concept of the AQS also considered the education policy making in Rhineland Palati-

nate and included e.g. Feedback of staff representatives in schools.

In September 2007 AQS started the formal external evaluation. An external evaluation for a school takes about four to six month. Schools are evaluated by teams, which consists of the AQS evaluator, a school supervisor or a 'co-evaluator', who are teachers, headmasters from other schools. The AQS applies different methods to gather school data and uses evaluation instruments to ensure that the perspectives of all persons and groups in public schools, e.g. teachers, students, parents are included in the external evaluation. AQS applies quantitative instruments (e.g. questionnaires for teachers, students, parents and statistical data) and qualitative instruments (e.g. interviews with representative groups in the school community).

After an external evaluation the AQS team for analysis compiles information and data of a school in an evaluation report. This evaluation report describes the current quality status of a school. The report is then delivered to the evaluator in charge. In a subsequent feedback-visit the evaluator presents the findings of evaluation report to the school community. Based on the findings of the evaluation report, schools are then requested to define objectives to enhance their quality. These objectives are defined by the school and in guidance by the school supervision authority in charge. AQS will carry out a next external evaluation of the school after approximately five years. ◆



Agentur für Qualitätssicherung,
Evaluation und Selbstständigkeit von Schulen

Please note:

The AQS

moves in 2009

to Bad Kreuznach

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STRATEGIC ISSUES: THE “NEW OFSTED”

A report from

Tim Key

HMI



The “New Ofsted”: the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, was established in 1992 with responsibility for the inspection of every school in England. Although school inspection has a long history in England, having been carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors for over 150 years, the establishment of Ofsted was radical and challenging. Not only was every school in England to be inspected on a regular basis, the outcomes of every inspection were to be published in reports to be made available to parents, schools and anyone with an interest in education. You can find reports on every school

in England on the Ofsted website; have a look! The Ofsted website is one of the most highly used public sector websites in England. It is said that some weeks only the websites of Manchester United and Kylie Minogue receive more hits!

The post of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is currently held by Christine Gilbert. It is a high profile position, and Ofsted is rarely out of the news. Although Ofsted staff are civil servants, and paid for by the government, Ofsted itself is independent of the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and is therefore able to inspect and report independently.

In 1993 the criteria against which schools were to be judged were published in an inspection “framework”, which in itself was a radical and influential statement of what a “good” school looks like. This framework not only set out what inspectors would look for when they visited a school, it provided a basis on which schools could look at themselves, the beginnings of self-evaluation. Inspection frameworks are available on the web.

Ofsted, as the schools inspectorate,

quickly established itself as a household name; reports were welcomed by parents who for the first time knew what went on inside their children's school. But Ofsted has not been without its critics, particularly teachers, who claimed that inspection – or preparation for inspection – was stressful and time-consuming.

Responsibilities did not remain limited to the inspection of schools, however. In 2000, Ofsted was given responsibility for the regulation of childcare, including that provided by childminders. The scale of this is enormous: there are over 150,000 childcare settings in England. Responsibility for the regulation of childcare transferred from local authorities to Ofsted, along with a large number of childcare inspectors. Ofsted was also made responsible for the inspection of all government funded nursery education in the private, voluntary and independent sector. Basically, this work aims to reassure parents that their children are safe, well cared for and involved in activities which helped him develop and learn.

From April 1, 2007, the “new Ofsted” became responsible, in addition to those areas described above, for the inspection of the quality of social care provided for children and young people. This work aims to make sure that children and young people are kept safe from harm, that the service they receive is of the best possible quality and that the service meets their needs. The focus of this work is what in England is described as the “every child matters” outcomes for children and young people:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic well-being

Responsibilities for the inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service also transferred to Ofsted. Basically, Ofsted inspects the quality of the support children and families are given when the courts are

involved in making decisions about their welfare.

Ofsted also inspects a wide range of post-16 education, learning and skills providers: further education colleges, apprenticeships, adult and community learning, learning in prisons and the training of men and women in the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Ofsted also inspects initial teacher training.

Ofsted also inspects the way children services are provided by local authorities. All local authorities are reviewed by multidisciplinary teams drawn from Ofsted and several other national inspectorates. The focus of this work is increasingly provisioning and support for children and young people who are "at risk" or "vulnerable", such as those children who are being looked after by a local authority, or groups of children who traditionally do not do well in the education system.

Ofsted also has an advisory function. On the basis of the evidence received from this huge range of inspections, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is required to advise the Secretary of State on standards and the quality of education, children's services and skills in England. She is also required to present an annual report to Parliament and to provide other reports and advice as requested by the Secretary of State.

The scale of all this work is enormous. For example, last year Ofsted inspected 27,000 childcare providers, 6,800 schools, over 100 colleges, 240 providers of adult learning and over 800 providers of children's social care. Never before has a single inspectorate been able to report with such authority on key issues that affect the lives of children and young people.

Not surprisingly, Ofsted has grown in size considerably in the years since 1992. Much of the school inspection work is contracted out to privately employed in-

spectors, working under the supervision and training of HMI in Ofsted. Even so, Ofsted employs around 3,200 staff directly, including about 360 HMI, 770 childcare inspectors and another 200 social care inspectors. Ofsted also employs about 700 additional inspectors. The budget is around £200 million, of which about £43 million is spent on school inspection. Most inspectors are home workers, supported by one of three regional offices (in Bristol, Nottingham and Manchester) and a central office, Alexandra House, in London.

The new Ofsted is in a strong position to make sure that inspection is better coordinated and linked with a drive to improve standards, to make things better for children and young people, particularly those in the most difficult circumstances. Its vision is summarised in the words "raising standards, improving lives".

Further information, including examples of inspection reports, can be found on the Ofsted website: www.Ofsted.gov.UK. ♦



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INSPECTION AND SCHOOLS - DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

An essay by

Ferry de Rijcke



Inspectorates have an important role in safeguarding the quality of education. At present, inspectorates in most European countries are facing questions about the ways they will fulfil this role in the coming years. I will indicate some of these questions in order to illuminate what is at stake, and what possible answers could be.

There is turbulence in education systems in European countries. Politicians, the Lisbon ambitions in mind, are concerned with the contributions of education to the economic and social prosperity of their countries and citizens. Parents worry, as they always have, about the wellbeing and the opportunities of their children and, more than ever, behave as critical customers demanding quality from schools. In society in general debates on the objectives of schooling vary from extreme new demands, to calls for going back to traditional basics. And kids, well, they seem increasingly to regard school as a place of the past. Learning and life takes place outside school, more than ever before.

Amidst turbulence people tend to resort to actions that give them the feeling to be in control. An increasing load of data, of evidence of performance is demanded of institutions and organisations, both in the public and private sector. This widespread and ever growing practice has come to be labelled as the audit society. (Michael Power: *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*, 1999). Schools in most countries have not escaped this scrutiny. Accountability in itself is a reasonable thing to ask: schools perform vital functions and society is entitled to be informed on how well they do this and how they spend the public money allotted to them. The main question is whether demanding ever more 'hard' data from schools is enough to meet the worries and concerns indicated above.

So what can inspectorates do in these circumstances?

First of all, it is important to realise that the organisations we in Europe call 'inspectorates of education' in fact differ widely from each other. All members of SICI, the European organisation of education inspectorates (Standing International Conference of national and regional Inspectorates of education, <http://www.sici-inspectorates.org/>), have a role in ensuring compliance to education laws and all are supposed to contribute to quality of education. But their actual remits that determine how they do this, show essential differences.

To some inspectorates 'whole school evaluations' is the core business. This is the case in for instance, England, Scotland and the Netherlands. Inspectors visit schools and draw up reports on all relevant aspects. These reports then are input for school policy, they provide information for parents, and their aggregated data inform about the state of education in the country and can serve as evidence for policy making.

In other countries inspectors concentrate on evaluating staff performance and are involved in decisions on hiring and firing, of placement and promotion. Inspectorates also differ in the ways they are involved in school improvement. In some countries inspectors are consultants, actively assisting schools in their efforts to raise quality. At the other end of the spectrum are those inspectorates that strictly avoid mixing external evaluation with co-responsibility for the internal quality policy of schools.

Despite these differences, we can discern a number of common topics in the debates on the future of inspection in European countries. For a large part these are provoked by developments in the positions and responsibilities of schools. In a recent study EURYDICE has outlined the increase of school autonomy in European countries and the new forms of accountability that accompany this (EURYDICE: School

Autonomy in Europe. Policies and Measures, 2007. Also available at: <http://www.eurydice.org/>). The study shows that there is a considerable diversity in reforms across Europe, and also that countries follow different time-lines. Autonomy in different countries concerns different areas. Decision making on finances, on staff, on pedagogy and didactics, on school organisation: all of these may in varying degrees be delegated to the school level. On the whole, EURYDICE observes a stronger emphasis in recent years on enlarging the responsibility of schools in matters that are at the core of education: pedagogy, didactics, methods of teaching and learning.

There are good reasons for strengthening the decision-making power and policy capacity of schools. Education policies today generally acknowledge that schools bear the primary responsibility for good education. Devolving decision-making power to schools is a logical move in times when the contexts in which schools operate become more volatile. Student populations in urban surroundings do not make the same demands on schools as do kids that visit small country schools. Youngsters from homes with a number of internet-connected computers tend to ask teachers different questions than children living on the other side of the digital divide. Schools, in order to provide good education, must respond to new challenges, adapt in an active way to specific demands and needs, as well as achieve the national objectives of the school system they are part of. This implies that schools must contribute to more than academic learning alone, and it requires a capacity to learn as organisations. It most definitely means that they need room to move.

It does not mean that the knights of the audit society pass the school doors. As schools are given more leeway, there seems to be a new impetus to demand ever more information about their actual performance. There certainly is an ambiguity here.

So how can inspectorates meet the quite reasonable demand of society to be informed about the quality of its schools and to be given a guarantee that schools meet national quality standards, without stifling the schools' policy capacity by detailed standards of performance, uniformly applied in elaborate scrutiny and requests for ever more information?

1. Reliable information

The contribution of inspectorates first of all can consist of supplying dependable information and analyses of what is happening in schools from day to day. Many that volunteer to give their opinions on education matters have no doubts about their expertise on schooling. Inspectorates can make a big difference by footing education debates on information that is relevant and has a solid relation to reality. This includes quantitative data, based on shared definitions and carefully collected. In addition, inspectors directly observe what is happening in schools, in classrooms, and in school computer labs, and they communicate directly with teachers, students, managers and parents. Using the expertise built up in numerous school visits, inspectors add qualitative insights to quantitative data on outcomes, dropout rates, timetables and expenditure. They can provide insight in the processes behind raw quantified performance data, for the school, for parents and for policy makers.

2. Safeguarding common quality and compliance

Inspectorates can assess the performance of a school applying national, uniform standards and criteria. These are important and to serve their purpose, they must be well defined and clear to all those involved. Inspection reports in this area contribute to the confidence of society that schools abide by political decisions embedded in education laws. (For the special character of non quantitative assessment see Elliot W. Eisner: *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*, 1997). They ensure the public that basic quality is guaranteed, and safeguard the rights and interests of pupils, students and parents, as well as those of school staff.

3. Assessing quality in diversity

In addition, inspection can pass judgement on the specific qualities of the individual school. This can be done by assessing its actual performance against the school's self-chosen and explicitly stated ambitions. Inspection as meant here, can also take into account whether the school is doing as good as it could, given its student population. Here, inspection serves as a mirror for the school, to be used by the school as an incentive for improvement.

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Strictly holding on to national regulations and quality standards enables inspectorates to identify failing schools, i.e. schools that do not meet the minimum standards of quality. There are good reasons for focussing attention for schools at risk. They actually fail to provide to their students education that meets minimum quality standards. More and more inspectorates are developing methods of risk analysis to timely identify these schools. In the Netherlands it has recently been decided to concentrate inspection efforts primarily on weak schools. Not all inspectorates make this choice. The Scottish inspectorate, though equally convinced that failing schools are a serious matter, is also concerned with underperforming schools: schools that could do better. In terms of numbers of schools involved, underperformance in the Scottish view is a much more serious problem than the limited number of schools that fail. (For the Scottish inspectorate's programme on school improvement see: <http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/>).

4. Instruments and foci

Inspectorates more and more use tested and validated instruments to enhance the objectivity of their work. Objectivity is to be understood here as the degree of consistency in the way different inspectors make judgments. These must be as close as possible for similar school situations.

There has been quite a lot of international cooperation between inspectorates in the development of inspectors' toolboxes. It is interesting to see, that inspectorates, after careful consideration, agree to a very large extent on the topics, indicators and criteria that matter. (England, Scotland, Sweden, Flanders, Northern Ireland, France, the Czech Republic and The Netherlands are among the countries that have been involved in fruitful exchanges on instrument development. In the European projects ICALT [International Comparative Analysis of Learning and Teaching] and P2P/P2V [Peer-to-Peer and Peer-to-Validation; <http://p2p.eun.org> and <http://p2v.eun.org>] shared instruments have been developed that have been tested and applied in a number of countries).

Instruments focus on results and didactical behaviour and increasingly on conditions for good education. It becomes more and more important for inspectors to also assess the way schools have organised their processes of ensuring and

improving quality, and to what extent the school's policy capacity is developed so as to enable it to innovate, respond to new challenges and to effectively use its resources. An important tool in this respect is self-evaluation by schools.

5. School self-evaluation and external evaluation

In the ESSE project a number of SICI member-inspectorates have explored the conditions for and characteristics of successful self-evaluation by schools. (Results of the ESSE-project can found on the SICI website: <http://www.sici-inspectorates.org/>). External evaluation by inspectors is by definition of limited value unless the school itself takes its own responsibility for quality serious. In a number of countries schools are expected to practise self-evaluation in some form. In some cases this is not only obligatory by statute, but are the instruments uniformly prescribed as well. In most countries schools have some room to decide on their self-evaluation practice. The use inspectors make of the results of self-evaluation varies as well: they may take them as reference and rely on self-evaluation conclusions or completely replicate the data-gathering and analysis.

What is essential is that self-evaluation helps and encourages schools to actively and critically look at their own practices and use that process as starting point for improvement. Inspectorates' external evaluation should be such that this is fostered, not stifled.

6. Inspection reports: public information

In many countries there is hesitation with regard to public reporting. One reason for this is the fear of making life even more difficult for the schools in question, making them less attractive for new students and staff. This seems to be true in the case of ranking, in which schools are characterised by only a few dimensions of the complex school reality. However, a balanced inspection report, presenting tested evidence and careful analysis, as well as passing judgement, can be helpful for a school that has the intention to become better. Parents with access to inspection reports can exert pressure on schools to do something about less than satisfactory lessons, teachers and results.

The effects of inspections are strongly enhanced when school reports are made

public. Evidence of this can be seen in countries where publishing reports has been standing practice for some time. In England, for instance, a number of failing schools (described as “subject to special measures” or, in less serious cases, as having been given a ‘notice to improve’) have moved on and became excellent schools. (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>). There is another positive effect of public reports: since schools will scrutinise what inspectors say about them and will not hesitate to (publicly) address them if they disagree, inspectors are more likely to write reports that can stand up under such criticism. Being subject of scrutiny themselves keeps them on their toes.

7. Organisation aspects

All these issues have consequences for inspectorates as organisations. Two topics feature on the agenda of all inspectorates as well as SICI: data and the professional development of inspectors.

Data come into play in two ways. Inspectors increasingly can (and should) use data from different sources for their work. Sources may be national statistics, schools themselves, academic research, media (newspapers, radio and television), and the Internet (including fora and blogs). Inspectorates will need to develop effective and efficient ways to harness these infinite streams of information so as to make them manageable and fit for use in their work. On the other hand, inspectorates produce information as well. Their reports and the underlying data are a rich thesaurus for future inspection work and for analysis by others.

Inspectorates can be seen to develop dedicated ICT-systems to manage data. Stages of development differ widely, and solutions chosen relate to remit and practices of inspectorates. There is a daunting challenge here, but one that must be faced and mastered for inspectorates to carry out their tasks in a rapidly changing context.

In the light of what has been said before, it is obvious that the professional devel-

opment of inspectors cannot keep on following the familiar paths. Inspectors used to be considered qualified if their past experience included a lot of teaching and preferably a period as school leader. More and more we will have to look at the future as well: what does qualify a person for the inspector’s job as it is now and will develop in the days and years to come?

At this moment SICI members are preparing workshops on data and the use of ICT as well as on the professional development of their staffs. These will be occasions to exchange experiences and join forces to work on possible solutions.

Conclusion

As can be distilled from the remarks made above, inspectorates will not all move in the same direction, and there will not appear something like a European inspection framework. It is obvious, that such a development is undesirable as well as unlikely, given the differences between school systems and education cultures, differences that are highly valued by European countries and regions. At the same time inspectorates will continue to learn from each other while responding to the challenges they face and to optimise their contributions to better opportunities for children to learn and develop themselves. The topics briefly touched upon here will be on the agenda for times to come. It is up to individual inspectorates to make sure that the choices they make serve their contributions to improving schools for the benefit of pupils and of society as a whole. ♦

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PARTNERS: ICALT ...

The ICALT-project (International Comparative Analysis of Learning and Teaching), status quo summer 2008

ICALT 1

In the first phase of the ICALT project, the inspectorates of education in four European countries reviewed the results of research into the basic characteristics of good and effective teaching and selected standards and indicators for an observation instrument that could be used to evaluate the quality of teaching. This jointly developed observation instrument was pre-tested on reliability, inter-rater reliability and validity on more than 850 observations in four European countries. This study has shown that the quality of teaching in the four countries can be compared in a reliable and valid way as regards aspects as 'efficient classroom management', 'safe and stimulating learning climate', 'clear instruction', 'adaptation of teaching' and 'teaching learning strategies'. It turned out that only a few percent of the differences between teachers could be explained by differences between the four countries. Furthermore it may be concluded that the five aspects of the quality of teaching are positively and significantly correlated with pupils' involvement, attitude, behaviour and attainment.

ICALT 2

This year there are six countries participating in the project of ICALT-2. At this very moment we have received the observations from Flanders, Niedersachsen and Croatia, and we are expecting the results from Slovakia soon. The Dutch results will become available at the end of this month. We are waiting to hear from the Inspectorate in Scotland.

Steps in Analysis.

It is the meaning that every country will first receive information about the analysis of their own observations. These analyses will show the mean result for each of the clusters of events which make out the eight criteria that are distinguished in the observation form:

- Learning climate
- Instruction
- Feedback
- Organization
- Differentiation
- Strategies
- Pupils Involvement
- Metacognition

And, of course the results on the final judgments of the observers will be calculated.

The lessons have been observed on a national representative sample of primary schools in a country. Therefore these results give a measurement of the quality of the system in general and they can be used as an evaluation standard.

The second step is using the combined results to create an international average score, which can be used as benchmark. The aim is to deliver benchmarks for the quality of the eight criteria mentioned in table above.

The third step is using the results from the different countries to compare them on the criteria distinguished. This has to be done carefully and in relation to relevant national context variables.

Information on the ICALT project can be obtained from the project leader, Wim van de Grift of the Dutch inspectorate.

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Announcement:

In November 2008 the Inspectorate of the Netherlands is going to organize a meeting for a small delegation from each of the participating countries in ICALT-2. In this meeting we will talk about the national and the international results in relation to the goals of ICALT-2.

... AND P2V

P2V

P2V is a new project that is coordinated by European Schoolnet (www.eun.org). One of the workpackages of P2V is about inspecting for ICT in schools. This workpackage is carried out under the auspices of SICI and is coordinated by the Inspectorate of Education in The Netherlands. The project is co-financed by the European Commission.

P2V-WP6: evaluating ICT in schools

In a previous project called P2P (Peer-to-Peer), six SICI members designed an inspection framework to evaluate the use of ICT in schools. The framework is based on existing inspecting frameworks and indicators that have been in use in different countries, on the experience that was gathered during 12 peer review visits and on extensive discussions about the content of such a framework. Partners in P2P were SICI members France, Scotland, England, Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands.

The "V" in P2V stands for "Validation", as the project aims at ensuring that the instruments developed in P2P are applicable in other contexts.

The framework

The ICT evaluation framework contains three themes: Conditions, Use and Outcomes.

There is a number of quality areas (eight in total) within each theme. Quality indicators with corresponding evidence pointers are identified within each quality area.

Theme: Conditions:

Quality Areas:

- C1. Leadership
- C2. Infrastructure and access
- C3. Curriculum planning
- C4. Quality assurance and improvement

Theme: Use:

- QA U1. Pupil use
- U2. The teaching process
- U3. Administrative use

Theme: Outcomes:

- QA O1. Impact on learning and standards

The complete P2P framework can be downloaded as a pdf from <http://p2p.eun.org>. The aim was to construct a framework that would give us an exact and reliable picture of the quality of ICT use in a school but without making it too heavy in terms of the time needed to carry out such an evaluation. First reactions show that we have succeeded in doing this, but of course the proof of the pudding is in the eating: we now need to use the framework and see how we deal with it in practice.

The aim of P2V

In P2V (Peer to Validation) we now have the opportunity to actually use the framework in several countries. P2V runs in 2007 and 2008. Inspectors from Sweden, Lithuania, Belgium (Flanders) and Scotland have been visiting schools in their own country, but all will be using the same evaluation framework. To this end, the framework has been adjusted to become a proper evaluation toolkit, that can also be used by SICI members who are not partner in the project. During their visits they will be joined by inspectors from The Netherlands, who will take care of the reporting. During a kick off meeting in The Netherlands, all participating inspectors have exchanged views on the framework and experienced its use when they carry out two pilot school visits. The aim is to carry out 18 school visits in total. Prior to the school visits, each school has been asked to fill in a self-evaluation questionnaire. Inspectors have received training by means of lesson observation forms, interview guidance and have exchanged views after each school visit. On September 22, 2008, the inspectorates' strand of P2V will conclude with an evaluative and wrap-up meeting for the participating countries, followed the next day by a SICI workshop for all inspectorates' interested in the results.

Information can be found at URL: <http://p2v.eun.org>

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THE BLUE BOOK

In 1997 SICI produced a printed document in which profiles of all its members were presented. In 2006 it was decided to prepare a new digital version. The result will be a database, accessible via the SICI website (www.sici-inspectorates.org), with a collection of factual descriptions of the principles, systems and processes of inspection of education in the SICI member-countries, as well as an inventory of recent developments and topics. These will be presented in a fixed format, supplemented by elements characteristic of individual inspectorates. Each profile will include a brief description of the education system that the profiled inspectorate operates in. The database will be searchable in accordance with the information needs of SICI members and others interested in school evaluation. The database will be in English. The data will be periodically revised,

at the instigation of SICI members or others.

The database will also contain brief texts with hyperlinks to relevant documents.

The contract for this work has been signed between SICI and the University of Antwerp. We are cooperating with EUN (European Schoolnet) for the development of the technical structure of the database.

In 2007 a questionnaire has been distributed to all SICI members to be filled out. As of June 2008 17 SICI members have sent in their answers.

We plan to present the first results in September 2008. As soon as the profile of an inspectorate is ready, it will be placed online. ◆

Ferry de Rijcke
29 June 2008



ACTIVITIES 2008

Date		Events	Location
MARCH	7	1 st Meeting of Executive Committee (EC)	London
JUNE	2-3	Workshop: "New Approaches To Inspection And Professional Development For Inspectors".	Edinburgh
JUNE	20	2 nd Meeting of Executive Committee (EC)	Brussels
SEPTEMBER	11-12	Workshop: "ICT Within The Inspection Activity"	Prague
SEPTEMBER	22-23	Workshop: "P2V - Concluding project session (day one) and presentation of instruments to other inspectorates (day two)"	Brussels
OCTOBER	7 8 9-10	3 rd Meeting of Executive Committee (EC) School visits (in the morning) General Assembly (GA)	Bucharest
NOVEMBER	6-7	Conference : "Governance and Performance of Schools in Europe" organised by ESEN (Ecole Supérieure de l'Education Nationale) during the French Presidency of the European Union	Poitiers
NOVEMBER	20-21	Seminar: "Evaluation Of Schools"	Paris/Creteil
DECEMBER	12	4 th Meeting of Executive Committee (EC)	London



An organisation of 25 members drawn from across Europe, working together to improve their understanding of education and inspection.

The current members are:

Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium (German Speaking Community), Belgium-Walloon, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, France, Hessen, Ireland, Lithuania, Macedonia, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Northrhine-Westphalia, Portugal, Rhineland-Palatinate, Romania, Saxony, Scotland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Wales. ●

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