INTRODUCTION

Policy-makers and administrators in ministries of education have to ensure that schools are operating effectively, that strategies for curriculum development are successful and that instruction is satisfactorily delivered. Concern for quality in schools has traditionally found its expression in the employment of inspectors whose primary activities focus on quality control in these domains.

This article is based on information stored in a system which was designed by me at the Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung. The system was developed in a project conducted during 1989 and 1990 in all member states of the European Community to survey the activities of those persons entrusted with the function of school inspection and their contribution to the quality of schooling. The project was supported with a grant from the Commission of the European Communities.

The objectives of the survey were:

- to produce a report on "The contribution of inspectors to the quality of schooling in the member states of the European Community",

- to provide Country Analyses which would be of use for documentation in Exchange Programmes supported by the Commission,

- to develop a Data Bank on Educational Management and Administration Systems Information and Research (EMASIR) which can be up-dated regularly to provide data for information system and materials for basic research,

- to gain insights into processes in educational administration in the fields of qualification, selection and professional development of administrators, and

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1 Educational Management and Administration Systems Information and Research.
into evaluation and assessment procedures for pupils, teaching staff, school principals and inspectors.

Inspectorates in all countries of the European Communities were invited to participate, but not all regions or countries could be covered in the relatively short duration planned for the execution of the project. Scotland, Northern Ireland, the autonomous regions in Spain, and a number of Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, could not be included in the study due to limitations in time and resources.

Following a request from me to Chief Inspectors in each state, inspectors from primary and secondary levels were nominated to work on a Country Analysis for their own country. Guidelines were issued which included specific question in each of the eight sections of the analysis: introduction; geographical, demographic and political information; school system; previous career and method of selection of inspectors, preparation and training of inspectors; statistics; other persons and groups in positions of responsibility; innovation and change; the work of inspectors in curriculum and instruction, with pupils, with teachers; a critical overview of general and specific problems in both the school system and the inspectorates.

This standard format allows comparisons to be made on similar issues by referring to the same sections in each country analysis, because one of the constraints and office-holders with similar titles are doing more or less the same type of work. With this in mind, these documents were written to be of use to educational managers and administrators and to researchers, to increase understanding about the administration and management of several European educational systems and to develop a basis for systematic research².

Although the views expressed here are those of the writer, they attempt to take into account the opinions expressed by practising inspectors during national consultative sessions and the critiques written by them during the project, which formed part of the country analyses. Moreover, further perspectives were obtained during three multi-national working seminars with those practitioner consultants.

² The Country Analyses are obtainable from Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, Schloss Strasse 29, 6000 Frankfurt am Main 90.
Definitions

The term "inspector" was addressed to those with responsibility for overviewsing the educational and pedagogical aspects of primary and secondary levels of schooling rather than to those controlling the bureaucrat-administrative function. In some cases, difficulties arose with the use of the term "adviser". In Denmark, for example, in the primary and first level secondary school, pedagogical advisers are appointed in some districts, whose main duty is purely advising and supporting teachers. In others, such as in England and Wales, advisers have and inspecting and reporting function in addition to the advisory role. In the latter case, this type of adviser was included in the study. An exception was made with the example from Greece, because of the interest in reporting on a system with an advisory service which has abruptly replaced an inspection system.3

Rather than pre-defining the term "quality of schooling" for the inspector consultants, they were asked to describe their tasks in inspection, which were later analysed to relate them to specific aspect of quality. They were categorized under headings of their work with Curriculum and Instruction, with Teachers, with Pupils and with Schools as Institutions.

The term "contribution" was interpreted in a wide sense. Inspectors' work can be an indirect, maintenance role through controlling and monitoring operations or a direct, developmental role in advisory and supporting committees. Moreover, in view of their ancillary activities, they contribute to the quality of a system in ways unrelated to their position as inspectors.

The contribution of inspectors to the quality of schooling

The Quality of Teachers

A distinction is made here between the quality of teachers and the quality of teaching. In a section below, the relationship between the evaluation of teachers and the assessment of teaching is discussed. In this

3 A new situation arose at the end of 1990, when changes were implemented.
section, the quality of teachers will be related purely to personnel management.

- Probationary teachers

During the probationary period of a teacher’s career, an inspector is required in some countries to visit the novice and to make an estimation of the probationer’s suitability and competence. At the end of this period the inspector will be present in an examination to decide whether the candidate has the quality to be granted permanent status.

- Qualified, Permanently Appointed Teachers

The inspection of teachers is laid down in regulations in many countries as the duty of inspectors. The purpose is to control teaching personnel and to make reports on them. These reports are then held in personnel files, which may or may not be accessible to teachers depending on the openness of administration in the respective countries. The objectives is system accountability by reporting on satisfactory organizational compliance with regulations, the conformity of teachers’ to duties, and the quality of teachers.

The practice of inspecting teachers varies considerably in the several European countries. In Bavaria all teachers in a particular type of school must be visited by inspectors every four years until their 50th birthday; in Hesse such inspections are only carried out for special reasons; on the promotion of a teacher in rank, in selection procedures for senior posts and in cases of complaints against a teacher. In Rheinland-Pfalz, the practice has been delegated to school principals and is now no longer the responsibility of inspectors. In France, the regional secondary-level inspectors were orginally created to help the Inspecteurs Généaux to evaluate teachers, who still exclusively visit teachers in higher secondary schools. In the Irish secondary-level schools, although regulations do provide for the inspection of teachers, it is carried out at different degrees of intensity due to staffing difficulties in some areas of the secondary inspectorate. At the primary-level in Ireland, instead of inspecting teachers as a matter of personnel control, an alternative policy of inspecting schools and teaching has been in operation for some time.

Although formally stipulated in regulations, in many countries teacher evaluation is a task which is becoming less systematically carried out by inspectors due to their many other duties. Consequently, it has become
rather a sporadic ritual. It serves little purpose other than causing considerable administration and the mere filing of reports. Such practices seem rarely to contribute permanently to the improvement of a teacher’s performance. On the contrary, inspectors in several countries reported that subsequent visits to a teacher who had received a negative report merely confirmed the previous assessment.

Some inspectors claimed that the procedure contributed to improving a teacher’s morale, but acknowledged that one visit every five or more years is a rather paltry form of recognition.

Most countries have regulations stating that inspectors’ duties primarily include inspecting and reporting on teachers. In some countries, the practice seems to have broken down due to the problem of not being able to keep up the visits within prescribed periods. The immensity of the task is becoming critical and the intervals are becoming more and more extended. In a few countries inspectors visit teachers purely to gain information about standards of teaching and to report. In the primary sector in Ireland and in both sectors in Italy, Portugal, and Greece, teacher personnel evaluation by inspectors is only carried out in exceptional cases. In England and Wales, central inspectors (Her Majesty’s Inspectors) and Local Authority Inspectors do not evaluate teachers, which is a task usually assigned to school principals.

**The Quality of Teaching and Learning**

The practice of evaluating teachers can give inspectors an impression of the general standards of teaching, but, in general, the focus on the teacher in teacher assessment results in the importance of the need to assess the quality of teaching being overlooked. The assessment of the quality of teaching is highly dependent on what the inspectors’ philosophy is of what is good teaching. In one country practices which are identified as poor are not criticised in another because, it may be the form rather than the style of what the teacher is doing which is paramount in inspection, i.e. compliance with rules and regulations, punctuality, and following the prescribed syllabus, rather than application of teaching techniques, individualized instruction and caring for poorly performing pupils.

It is a complex problem, because although good teaching must imply learning by the pupils, difficulties arise in determining whether the degree of learning is satisfactory. Inspectors oversee pupils’ work books, review regular class test result and, in some systems, question classes as a means
of checking whether the pupils have learned what is in the syllabus. In view of the small amount of time they actually spend with any one class, the reliability of this last method is problematic. In the survey, only one group of inspectors, Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools in England and Wales, a national inspectorate, gave the inspection of teaching as an objective disassociated from the personnel management activity of inspecting teachers.

The Quality of the Syllabus

The term "syllabus" refers here to the plan of contents in a course of study in one subject over the period of one year or more. This section refers to that part of inspectors' work relating to syllabus formulation, implementation, modification and monitoring.

A frequently-cited important criterion in the selection of inspectors is their recognized excellence as teachers. Their knowledge of their subject area, as former secondary-level teachers, is a basis for their participation in syllabus committees. Sometimes this is in the formal function of representing the Ministry or Department of Education, but in other cases it is through a personal interest in the activity. In the former, their presence can still be regarded as a mode of inspection, for their observations and style of participation are forms of overseeing and reporting on developments. Moreover, their input can enrich such deliberations because of their knowledge of direct needs in the system, which are broader than the individual teacher's viewpoint.

During their visits to schools, their direct interest in the quality of the syllabus is in seeing its application. It is here that they are able to monitor the way in which it is being delivered and to identify needs for modification. Particularly in the early stages of the implementation of a new syllabus, the role of an inspector is essential for feed-back within the system. This developmental role was cited by most of the consultants in the survey.

In a number of countries, it is the formal duty of inspectors to check that the syllabus is being followed as laid down in syllabus regulations. This maintenance role is assumed during routine visits to schools by checking the work of teachers against the schedules.

The Quality of the Educational Administration, Management, and Organization of Schools

As the survey was aimed mainly at those inspectors who are more concerned with the pedagogical domain and not with bureaucratic administra-
tion and budgetary discipline, the latter were not investigated in any depth. Those forms of inspection were reported, additionally, from Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.

With the exception of four countries (Ireland, England, Wales and France), the concern with the implications of the educational administration, management and organization of State schools seemed to be only marginal. In France, the primary-level inspectors are responsible for the quality of planning, organization and management as it relates to pedagogical concerns and in secondary schools, the "inspecteur de la vie scolaire" has responsibility for the quality of the whole academic life of the school. In Ireland, at the secondary level, it has remained relatively underdeveloped as an approach. It poses questions of intervening in an area which also could be considered the preserve of the governing boards.

One of the reasons for the lack of assessment of this dimension in continental schools is the domination of the legalistic-administrative form of control which appears to leave little incentive or demand for individual leadership and initiative and accounts for the relatively weak position of the school principal. Where few or no competences are delegated for internal school management and where positions carry comparatively less managerial responsibility, the assessment of this aspect of quality is deemed to be covered by bureaucratic process.

In England and Wales, where considerable power resides at the school level in decision-making about the allocation of financial and human resources and, until recently, the determination of the curriculum, it has always been the duty of inspectors to monitor the effectiveness of the use of those powers.

In a few countries, the administrative task of allocation appropriately qualified staff to the schools is assigned to inspectors, because of their supposed knowledge of the character and needs of particular schools and the appropriateness of the selection of specific teachers.

The Quality of the School as an Institution

The evaluation of the whole institution (philosophy, management, staff, curriculum, teaching, etc...) was reported only in three countries (Ireland, England and Wales) for state schools. The purpose is primarily to establish a basis for reporting on System Quality.

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In Ireland, information is gathered about primary schools through a School Report prepared by the Inspector in collaboration with the school. At the secondary level "organization inspection" is included in the inspectors' responsibilities. In England and Wales, General Inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectors' visits to State schools result in published reports, which cover all aspects of a school’s activities. Although these methods of whole school inspection are static and past-oriented, this kind of reporting establishes a bench-mark for a school at a particular point in time. They provide a basis for making future improvements and an example for other schools in assessing and improving their own performance. It is too early to assess whether a shift might be occurring in France, where a reorganization of the inspectorate with new objectives on a cross-level, cross-school, team system is being implemented experimentally in several regions.

In the other continental countries, only privates schools are inspected as institutions. The reason is that these schools must be shown to be attaining standards set by the State in the quality of courses offered and in teaching. One reason for not inspecting State schools as institution is that it could be regarded as superfluous, due to the already vigorous continental tradition of administering schools by regulation. Schools can be assumed to be operating optimally and satisfactorily through compliance with predetermined standards.

The Quality of Processes in a System

Inspectors are in the position to act as intermediaries between the centre and the periphery of education systems. They are a vital link between the schools, central administrators and policy-makers and can keep them informed about the progress of changes and problems in the field. In bureaucratic-legalistic systems they can also advise teachers and principals about the admissibility of decisions made within the limited scope of their decision-making powers.

In the function of monitoring, most inspectorates are more occupied with checking conformity to regulations. Moreover, a disproportionate amount of time has to be spent on a few disciplinary cases or on routine activities, such as administration. Monitoring the internal processes of the school, such as, for example, investigating teachers concerns about the reliability and validity of their own testing procedures or the effectiveness of full and subject- area staff meetings seem to be neglected. Due to insufficient time or even inadequate staffing of an inspectorate, such
investigations become rather superficial and cannot get to the core of quality control.

The role of the inspector is to discover snags and difficulties, to suggest improvements and to find solutions to problems. Although this monitoring function is important for a dynamic system, in most countries inspectors are not expected to make decisions about the problems they address and they can only make suggestions or recommendations. Most consultants during the working sessions referred to a sense of powerlessness and claimed that their success depends on how well they can exert influence.

The Quality of the System

Policy-makers need information in order to know how well a system is working, especially in systems with long administrative structures from the centre to the periphery. This is particularly necessary in countries with centralized organization, such as Italy, the States in the Federal Republic of Germany and, in spite of or because of some aspects of recent reform, in France.

Reporting by inspectors becomes a necessarily important function. In some countries this is carried out by centrally-based inspectors, such as in France and Italy using information gathered by regional inspectors. In Britain, Her Majesty’s Inspectors, work separately, autonomously and independently of other, regional authorities inspectors.

The openness of reporting varies. In some countries, inspectors’ reports are entirely confidential and the public is not informed, whereas in others there may be partial or total publication of findings and observations.

For the inspectors, this approach is summative and conclusive. It tends to be static, past oriented and does not necessarily guarantee the improvement of quality. The information, having been collected and provided to the administrators and policy-makers, can be used or ignored, but it is usually not for the inspectorate to undertake any measures to ameliorate any deficits. An exception is their vital contribution to the in-service education of teachers. In many systems, as they have no powers, they cannot undertake to see that some person or some group takes on the responsibility remedying situations they have observed. One of the frequent complaints from inspectors in several countries was their feeling that their observations are ignored by administrator and policy-makers. They saw themselves only being used as a tool for ensuring that policy is implemented and monitored, rather
than also being an informed professional resource for identifying problems and deficits and contributing to finding solutions.

*The Quality of Support and Development*

Inspectors can become involved in caring for the school in offering support for the means of improvement and in becoming part of the improvement process. The prerequisites are a real interest in schools, being able to assist in problem-solving, and being able to mediate in conflict.

These activities are less likely in countries where the policing role is prominent. When infrequent presence in the school is then mainly in the controlling function, it is less likely that there will be acceptance by the teaching staff of the supportive and developmental role of inspectors. The apartness of supervision, as a compartmentalized special part of the system, can alienate it from the schools. The degrees of support and development which can be offered by inspectorates seems to be very limited in many European systems, because of their predominant role in controlling and policing. Evaluating schools for improvement, as a joint responsibility of inspectors and teachers, is only rarely found as a principle.

Responsibilities other than inspection

In European community countries inspectors are often involved in many activities other than inspection. A few example will illustrate this point.

In some systems, inspectors are basically regarded as administrators who are given inspection tasks as an additional responsibility. In most States in Germany for example, inspectors work from local or regional offices, where administration of the school system is a heavy burden. As they have become more involved in this kind of work, the duty of inspection has become more superficial.

Inspectors are also regarded as generalists and all-rounders who are expected to assist in the preparation of Ministerial speeches about many aspects of the school system and, as the occasion demands, represent the Ministry in public meetings, other professional engagements and in events abroad. They are experienced practitioners in the school system and it is convenient for administrators to be able to assign them to a wide range of committee work (syllabus development, special reports, school management, education councils, international councils, etc...). In these committees, they
usually have a role of representing the Ministry of Education and not that of monitoring or inspecting. Moreover, as pedagogical experts in the system with experience as teachers, they can be used assigned to monitor and administer examinations are being carried out according to regulations, but they are not involved in the examining process. In Germany, the inspectors are appointed as chairmen of oral examining committees. They monitor the quality examination papers submitted by teachers for the Matriculation Examination (Abitur), before permitting the teachers to present them to the candidates. In Ireland, where no alternative structures have been developed, inspectors at the secondary level develop, write, check, proof-read, supervise, and mark examinations, and, finally, they are involved in the adjudication of the appeals process.

As has been discussed above, the experience of inspectors as former teachers enables them to become actively involved in devising syllabi and writing books for use in schools. In some countries, to a limited extent, they monitor the practical problems of implementation of new syllabi. In this and other areas, inspectors have a linking role between the schools, the Ministry and its institutions.

Where no highly-structured, separate system for the further in-service education of teachers exists, the knowledge gained by inspectors about teaching standards results in their either setting up and animating in-service education courses for teachers or in their becoming involved in the planning and coordination of alternative provision, directing the attention of the providers of such courses to those areas which they regard as urgent.

Where inspectors work closely enough with training, in-service education and research institutions, they are able to bring new ideas, practice and information into the school. In Italy, for example, it is the special responsibility of post-primary inspectors to be in touch with research institutions to encourage innovation in schools. Other inspectorates, particularly Her Majesty’s Inspectors in the United Kingdom, stress the importance of disseminating principles of good teaching practice. In many systems, administrators depend on inspectors to be the managers of the introduction and implementation of planned innovations through changes brought about in educational policy.
CONSTRAINTS ON EFFECTIVE INSPECTION

During the survey a number of features became noticable which seemed to be a constraint on inspectors’ effectiveness.

In some countries there was a lack of clear philosophy about the objectives of inspection. In addition, the absence of good management in some inspectorates has led to poor organization, lack of coordination, and subsequent loss in a sense of direction. A number of inspectors expressed feelings of uncertainty of purpose due to changes occurring in the education systems. In the past few years, however, a number of inspectorates have been reviewing from the majority of European Community countries.

A related problem in many systems is the lack of autonomy of an inspectorate. Inspectors are the servants of the administrators and are constrained in defining their own tasks.

They are often assigned too many indirectly-related or unrelated tasks. Consequently, there is a tendency to have to pursue short-term objectives instead of having long-term plans. Some consultants mentioned the tendency of being assigned to other tasks before being able to complete an improvement process and bring it to a successful conclusion.

The situation is sometimes worsened if, within the scope they do have, they choose to work on tasks which should be delegated to other persons or groups and which should only be coordinated or overseen by the inspectors.

Their involvement in so many tasks and activities results in inspectors being seen too infrequently in schools in some countries. The frequency of visits then depends on how much time remains for inspection after other tasks with a higher priority set by the administration have been completed. This creates an image of a distant, inaccessible, administrator type and leads to a loss of credibility with teachers. The potential for a cooperative, evaluative approach is lost.

The pattern of information dissemination seemed to be more centre-periphery rather than an interaction in both directions. In this situation, reporting tends to become an activity in itself at the local level instead of providing a source of information to policy-makers and a means for system evaluation.
On the other hand, inspectors as individuals appear to enjoy considerable autonomy, which is a reflection of their ability to work independently. Yet, from the system point of view, it has the disadvantage of eroding the basis of working in general, coherent direction. Moreover, inadequate communication between inspectors at different levels of schooling also leads to lack of articulation between schools, creating serious problems in dovetailing syllabi and identifying discrepancies in standards at pupil transfer stages.

In addition to and apart from short-staffing in some inspectorates, it was noticeable in most countries that there is inadequate preparation for the office of inspector and little or no provision for in-service education. Such measures would enable them to review and refine their own performance. Inspectors expressed the problem of not being able to keep up-to-date and of no longer feeling experts in their own subject-areas.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Each country has developed systems of control, monitoring and support according to the needs of its own structures and environment. In general, due to their many ancillary tasks, when inspectors visit teachers and schools they mainly have time only for the controlling activities. Although there are exceptions where inspectors work more intensively in a creative, innovative and developmental way, they are limited by time constraints.

Cultural differences and norms are so ingrained that it would be inappropriate to recommend any European "standard" or optimal practice, but a shift seems to be occurring away from teacher personnel evaluation in the direction of institutional or system evaluation for quality development. To be effective, this would imply a cooperative, linking approach with schools, but, as has been shown, inspectors face the double hazard of being disregarded by the policy-makers at system level and not being accepted at school level. The reservations of teachers and principals, who have long understood inspection as a top-down relationship, act as constraints in bringing about effective change in this direction.

Mindful of the new challenges, in several European countries those responsible for inspectorates are reviewing objectives, the style of their management and the approach to the evaluative process. Successful reforms will depend on the extent to which new attitudes towards the evaluation of quality can be encouraged as a joint commitment by both inspectors and teachers.