

Workshop A:

“The position of inspectorates in education systems: degree of autonomy, functions”:

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1°) In most countries no great changes in autonomy have taken place. More changes have taking place regarding the knowledge of inspection processes and the use of data.

A diagnostic round revealed the following statements:

- Most school authorities perceive that the autonomy in schools is too high (Hessen)
- Parents say that education is more important than inspection as well as the economic environment. The role of school boards becomes more and more important. The use of data has become increasingly more important than in the past. (NL)
- Ofsted has a very rich database. Compared to an increasingly elder population young people have increased considerably their knowledge, skills and competencies. About their life skills we have more doubts and perceive that the outcome should be better. Parents expect a lot from inspection. The annual report and the influence of the press have also increased considerably.
- Education has always been politically very delicate. The freedom to manoeuvre has decreased. F.i. do we close weak schools? (Scotland).
- In the Czech Republic schools can only be closed by law and in the Flanders the advice to close a school is never followed. The Minister is in favour of closing weak schools, but gives them a last chance for 3 years.

2°) The second discussion was organised around the role of the administration versus the government and the influence of the latter on inspection.

- Ofsted is more and more using proportional inspections.
- The Czech and Romanian inspection have to set up a direct line with their Minister.
- In Hessen inspection makes direct contact with the administration and the Minister.
- In the NL's inspection have very good contacts with the administration.
- In FL inspection reports have an effect on the administration as well on decisions taken by the Minister. The inspection gives advice on all matters. The ultimate decision is taking by the minister.

3°) The role of the parliament:

- Receives the annual report of the inspectorate of education and debates about the report. On request of the minister parliament can influence the inspectorate's yearly plan of work. (NL)
- 90% of the schools are considered as performing well. The only negative reactions are expressed by the press.(Ofsted)

4°) The impact of trade Unions:

In most European countries they have strong teachers unions.

- They have an influence on the transfer of staff personnel (Romania)
- Tense relation with inspection (Ofsted)
- Regular meetings with Secretary-General of Education thru structured consultation via co-management (VL)

5°) The role of parents/pupils associations:

- Very little influence (NL)
- Influence on work processes (Ofsted)
- Contacts with pupils are increasing. Parents are usually passive. (Scotland).