

ICT workshop Prague 2009 – the final report

On 3th – 4th December 2009 the Czech School Inspectorate, in cooperation with SICI, held the international workshop „Possibilities and restrictions of ICT for the work of inspectorates – external evaluation of educational institutions“. This event was a loose follow-up to the Prague conference on ICT in September 2008. This time the workshop took place in the hotel President in the center of Prague.

The workshop was attended by 31 participants from 14 SICI inspectorates and a guest from Serbia. Unfortunately in the last minute two colleagues from Poland and one from the Netherlands were unable to take part in it on grounds of illness.

At the beginning of July 2009 a questionnaire was sent to each participating inspectorate and this questionnaire helped to set the themes for the workshop contents, presentations and work groups. The unabridged questionnaire and synthesis of the responses are *Appendices 1 and 2*. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to acquire up-to-date information on the situation in specified areas of ICT deployment in the work of inspectors.

The present situation in ICT deployment in their respective Inspectorates was presented by Robin Stoker (Ofsted, England – *Appendix 3*) and Frank Crawford (HMIe, Scotland – *Appendix 4*).

Alina-Aura Rapa (ARACIP, Romania – *Appendix 5*) and our colleagues from Slovakia (SŠI, Slovakia), who substituted for the ill Dutch colleague, informed about the present situation, inspection model and ICT deployment.

In the afternoon participants were divided into 3 work groups to discuss the following matters:

- Common data collection system
- Information systems supporting inspection activity and further information systems supporting related agendas
- Basic HW and SW equipment of inspectors
- Support for out-of-office work (e.g. at schools)
- ICT usage in providing services for the public (parents, schools, school founders, state administration)
- Recommendations to other countries

The following workshop day the participants had an opportunity to hear the most important work groups' conclusions – see *Appendices 6 and 7*.

As it became obvious from the sent questionnaire, inspection work in Flanders differs significantly from the other inspectorates (home-based work, free individual purchase of HW and SW for inspection activity, etc.). Therefore the last presentation by René Vanotterdijk

(Flanders, Belgium – *Appendix 8*) was devoted to the Flemish Inspectorate and its management of ICT deployment in the work of inspectors.

Workshop conclusions

Based on questionnaires, presentations and workshops in the course of the two-day workshop, we drew the following conclusions:

1. Due to globalisation in education there are many more similarities than dissimilarities among the European inspectorates;
2. Inspectorates prefer team work, team discussions;
3. Working with common methodology for inspection activity based on the quality of the set criteria prevails;
4. Evaluation of schools and the education system as a whole prevails;
5. Bill Gates and his Windows and Office is the Inspectorates' closest friend;
6. ICT helps field-inspectors to improve mobility, effectiveness, time management and gives them more freedom;
7. ICT increases field-inspectors' isolation and means constant need for decision-making;
8. Work of inspectors is henceforth without ICT unthinkable.

We could hardly find other activity area related to the European school inspectors, where changes are so remarkable. In 1995, when SICI was founded, we were working with electric typing-machines and the absolute ICT highlight was a computer with a 14-inch black-and-white monitor and a huge plastic floppy disk. At present we can see ICT development practically every day. The trouble is that a person = inspector is unable to absorb all these changes. But – and it is also one of the workshop conclusions – we must be very careful and not forget children, pupils, students and teachers for the sake of ICT and its deployment.

Inspection work has undergone dramatic changes in all European inspectorates. The last 15 years brought along many changes, especially in the inspection methodology area. External evaluation clearly prevails, so does the public presentation of inspection outcomes. ICT has brought an essential relief to inspectors – today it is not important where I am sitting and working, what is important is having a job done in time, having it sent by electronic means, and having it in high-quality.

The economical crisis is putting pressure and is going to put pressure practically on all inspection systems. The SICI president Graham Donaldson expressed the wish of all governments clearly by words “More for Less”. We (inspectorates) have to be prepared,

quick, exact, and effective and we must be visible. Compared to all testing agencies and companies, compared to PISA, TIMMS and other surveys, only we can offer a daily contact with schools. Testing, questionnaires are a routine job but direct lesson observation, teaching and learning is something radically different.

The saying “Time is money” is now being replaced by “Information is money”. And it is especially the inspectorates which, thanks to ICT, have a huge number of data at their disposal. The one who has data, who knows, how to deal with them, has unprecedented power. And the time is coming to show it, discuss it and be prepared for the changing situation.

The Prague workshop has confirmed that the Inspectorates not only take these facts seriously, they also abide by them.

Petr Drábek, Czech School Inspectorate

