

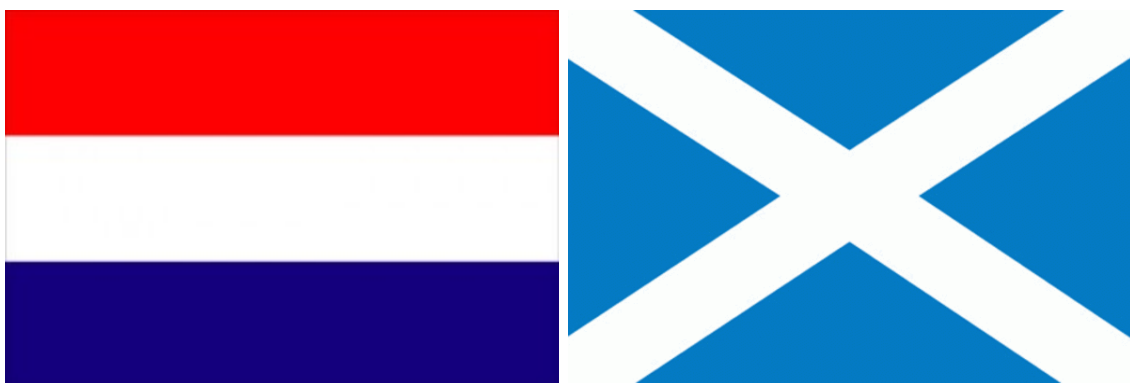


Education Inspectorate  
*Ministry of Education, Culture and Science*

## **SUMMARY-REPORT**

### **24-hours conference Scotland – Netherlands**

**Utrecht, 29-30 May 2012**





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## **SUMMARY-REPORT**

### **24-hours conference Scotland – Netherlands - 29-30 May 2012**

#### **Theme 1 - 29 May**

Day 1 was an informal exchange between the Scottish and the Dutch management.



#### **The model of the Netherlands Inspectorate of Education and the new business model Education Scotland: Annette Roeters and Bill Maxwell**

##### **Presentation 1**

Annette Roeters explains how the *Dutch Inspectorate* (IvhO) has expanded during the last ten years and now includes financial supervision for the authorities and also youth care. Since some years it also has a department 'Research and Development', which is essential in analyzing the massive body of data which schools and school visits generate. Within a few years the Inspectorate has set up a risk based method in

which the school outcomes play a central role in defining possible risks that may be related to the school's quality. The risk based approach of the Inspectorate enables proportional supervision. Weak schools can be monitored and are followed through, where adequate and good schools receive the Inspectorate's trust.

The Dutch Inspectorate operates semi-independently from the Ministry of Education. Furthermore it works independently from the national organizations that support and advise the educational field as well as from other organizations developing national standardized tests.

An important change over the last few years is that the Dutch Inspectorate also addresses the authorities and boards being responsible for the quality of schools and it's improvement. This approach enables getting more detailed insight in authorities' competencies in improving the quality of the schools for which they are responsible. Above this the inspectorate pays more systematically attention to school's compliance to the law.

##### **Presentation 2**

Bill Maxwell explains the new business model of *Education Scotland* since January 2012. The framework has been developed and improved since the post-war decade. Scottish education is doing quite well in international comparative research like OECD, but Scotland aims for further improvement of education in its 'Journey to Excellence'. The grounds for these aims can be found in a review of inspection outcomes between 2008 and 2011, which leads to the conclusion that there is 'considerable headroom for improvement in many schools'. The outcomes for the most deprived pupils are significantly lower than the outcomes for the least deprived pupils. The gaps between pupils at age 5 differ from half a year to a year for problem-solving abilities to one year and one year and a half for the expressive vocabulary. It is clear that the disadvantaged pupils need at least good education but preferably excellent schools to offer them equal opportunities for their development and their future. Education Scotland compares the outcomes for schools with schools having the same demographic characteristics, in order to give fair judgments on the quality aspects of the schools.

Education Scotland aims for school improvement, by encouraging and supporting schools to innovate and improve their quality. An important phase in the improvement cycle is a proper use of evaluation, which enables Education Scotland to do action research and to improve school's quality in the cycle of improvement. The management of this process integrating all phases of the improvement cycle is the core business of Education Scotland now. It intends to provide 'the best possible blend of national support and challenge in order to inspire and secure continuous improvement' for the Scottish learners.

In order to reach these objectives, Education Scotland makes use of strategies like providing the tools to help building school's capacities in the system and providing trainings and stimulating innovations within schools. On the other hand Education Scotland stays in close contact with the policy makers, to let them know what happens 'on the ground'. Thus Education Scotland combines building from the bottom and steering from the top by providing support and pressure at the same time.

### Discussion

In the discussion one of the conclusions is, that the IvhO pays proportionally most attention to the weak and unsatisfactory schools, where Education Scotland concentrates on having a professional dialogue and reflections with the schools that need improvement. Education Scotland considers reflection to the educational process as an effective way to help schools improving quality and also as an essential part of the inspection process.

## Theme 2 – 29 May

### Organization structure and School Quality: from good to better!

Both organizations work on a model for a 'Journey to excellence'.



### The Scottish approach and results of improving good schools in the 'Journey to Excellence'; and the enrichment of school inspections in the Netherlands Alastair Delaney and Bert Bulder

#### Presentation 3

Alastair Delaney presents how the Scottish inspection uses 'excellent' when a part (domain) of the school is outstanding or sector leading. On the six points scale this score is rarely given and is always a point of discussion within the inspectorate team or even on a higher level. On the other hand 'unsatisfactory' is even a more unusual score to give in the rating scale. So the scale tends moreover to be a four or five rating-scale.

The rating 'excellent' is only given for aspects of the schools quality in its profile, never for the whole school quality. So a school is never judged as an excellent school overall and the same is the case for the score 'average' or 'good'. So school's profiles have different ratings. So the Scottish Inspection does not give a single judgment of the quality of the school.

If there are discussions with schools in case they disapprove the profile, it is often about the difference between 'very good' and 'good'.

Compared to the Dutch framework, inspectors do give single judgments for the whole school quality on a three point scale: 'basic quality', 'weak performing' and 'very weak performing'.

For Scottish Inspection 'good practice' is an important tool to encourage schools, by showing that the school can achieve a higher level of performance and how to get there. The Scottish inspection team spends four days (or less) a week on a school. Tools are the professional dialogue and reflective discussion, with school staff members and teachers on several moments during the visit. Interviews with pupils and classroom observations gives input for the dialogue. Debate and discussion leads to better understanding of the judgments by the schools and it works motivating for the teams to get school improvement.

#### Presentation 4

Bert Bulder explains that the Dutch Inspectorate gives single judgments on the school's quality at the end of a school inspection. There is discussion about leaving the three point scale on the overall judgment for the school as a whole and to start working with a four or five point scale with 'excellent school' as the highest level of achievement.

The Dutch way of inspecting schools tends to focus on deficiencies. The Dutch Inspectorate considers working with minimal standards as part of the risk analysis as more effective than visiting all schools once in four years time.

There is discussion about what would happen if the Dutch inspection would give schools the overall judgment 'excellent': would this lead to a different approach of inspection or is it scratching the scales? It may even be necessary to have other teams of inspectors who are trained in this different approach, compared to the system that gives the 'very weak schools' another kind of supervision from the Dutch inspection.

The Dutch concept of risk based inspection needs an extra road to detect and to define excellent schools.

#### Discussion – a journey and a road to excellence

What is the professional standard, what makes an excellent school excellent? The best of a category is for Scotland 'excellent learning and teaching'. The aim is to bring schools to the next stage, and to push them to a higher level.

What if we would combine both approaches? In the Scottish approach sustaining excellence is important, for instance 'make a video which aspect you see as excellent and use this video as good practice on the website. And remind that it is also important to reflect constantly on your own quality "how did you get here?"

What to do with excellence? Achieve a higher level or achieve other goals?

Outstanding schools could be the leading schools in improving education in the local community.



## Theme 3 - 30 May

### The quality of the teacher Dré van Dongen and Gill Robinson



#### Presentation 5

The presentation of Dré van Dongen was based on the last chapter of the annual report (2011) of the Dutch Inspectorate : The quality of the Dutch teachers. The findings presented are based on a thousand lesson observations during inspections. The quality of the teachers is defined in two categories:

- 1) *basic skills* (clear explanation, task oriented teaching climate, active involvement of pupils) and
- 2) *more complex teaching skills* (differences between pupils (adjusting teaching), systematical assessment of pupils; poor-performing students (adjusting teaching)).

The data show that 14% of the teachers showed not all of the three basic skills in the observed lessons. Less than half of the observed teachers (42%) show both the basic and complex skills.

These findings call for improvement for which blaming is not regarded as a very successful strategy. The key concept of a successful improvement strategy, according to the Dutch Inspectorate, consists of two aspects:

- 1) school management (including school boards), the management should create ample opportunities for professional development of teachers
  - 2) Teachers should benefit from opportunities for their own professional development.
- In other words creating possibilities for professional development is needed on the management side and taking the opportunities by teachers on the other hand.

#### Presentation 6

In the presentation of Gill Robinson the definition of learner's needs is the starting point for defining the needs of teachers. Both needs are put in a (policy) context in which the curriculum for excellence is one aspect and public accountability the other aspect, being two poles of a continuum, in which (national) partnership to improve teacher professionalism and establishing conditions should enable teachers to teach more effectively, are defined as the main conditions.

The role of the inspection in this context is both evaluating teaching and learning and promoting the professional dialogue. The information which inspectors collect are used for:

- 1) establishing a national picture as part of the national reporting
- 2) informing the Scottish capacity building activities
- 3) making highly effective practices available for others.

## Discussion

The discussion is about differences and similarities in approach and in context between the two countries after the two presentations.



Two main issues:

### *The differences and similarities in the role of Local authorities in Scotland and in The Netherlands*

1. A main difference is *the number*: in Scotland there are about 35 councils (local authorities) whereas in the Netherlands there are about 1000 authorities (called school boards), ranging from one school board being responsible for just one school and school boards being responsible for all schools in one province (region) (60-100 schools).
2. Related to differences in size and number the councils in Scotland are all responsible in the same way for the quality of education in their region. In the Netherlands this is different. Large school boards are much more facilitated (professionally organized) than small school boards (often volunteers).
3. The Scottish Inspectorate is also in the position to inspect the councils (educational departments), which is mainly done in cases where a relatively large number of schools underperform. In the Netherlands there is no comparable practice so far.
4. During annual meetings with the school boards student results and signals about the quality of education are discussed with the school boards. This practice can be regarded as a systematic professional dialogue between the Dutch inspectorate and the representatives of school boards.



### *Professional dialogue as a key strategy of the Scottish Inspectorate*

1. The professional dialogue in Scotland is regarded as a strategy to contribute to teachers' and inspectors' professional development. Scottish inspectors are trained to acquire the necessary skills to provide professional positive feedback to stimulate further improvement. On a regular basis the quality of the feedback by the inspectors is evaluated. The Scottish professional dialogue is mainly focused on the evaluation of the teaching and learning process, but outcomes are taken into account as well. Trend-information about progress or the lack of progress (at student-, class- or school level) is not available at primary level in Scotland.
2. In the Netherlands giving feedback to teachers is seen as very difficult to give the adequate feedback that will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the teaching learning process.
3. Dutch inspectors are not specifically trained in the skills of professional dialogue. In fact there is not sufficient time in the planning of a school visit to focus on feedback.

4. Professional dialogue might be a powerful instrument, especially in a output/outcome oriented approach. Discussing trends in outcomes (at student-, class- and school level) can provide specific information about interrelated aspects of the teaching-learning process.

An overall conclusion of theme 3 is that there is much to learn from each other. It is very interesting to just 'hit' a few of the issues concerning the quality of the teachers. Further discussing on the (professional) dialogue may enrich both Scottish and Dutch practices.

## Theme 4 - 30 May

### Strategic inspection planning for innovation in education and schools Alastair Delaney (on behalf of Kenneth Muir) and Rick Steur



#### Presentation 7

Alastair Delaney explains how the new inspection approaches are designed to respond to and promote innovations in education. Referring to one of Bob Dylan's most famous songs, this presentation painted a picture of how 'times are changing' for assessment of the quality of schools in Scotland. In 2008, a major review of the approach of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) was carried out. Various factors influenced the outcome of the review, such as political considerations (emphasis should be on support and improvement of schools, not so much on evaluation), policy (curriculum for excellence, career long learning for teachers)

efficiency (proportionality, targeting) and the need to reduce the burden of scrutiny.

The review process has resulted amongst others in a number of 'principles of inspection and review': inspection should be geared towards improvement, it should build on self-evaluation, it should observe impact, not process, and 'one size fits all' should not apply. Essentially, inspection is there to get better outcomes for learners. 'Having all learners or users at the center of inspection and review' is therefore the central principle underpinning inspection by Education Scotland.

The proposals for a new approach to inspection have been submitted to major stakeholders. Education Scotland has received a wide range of feedback. An interesting example is the feedback from schools on the notification period for school visits. Some said they would rather not be told at all that an inspection was coming up, so they would not worry. Others asked for six weeks of preparation time to allow them 'to paint the toilets'. In the end, the notification period was reduced from the usual three week to two weeks. Others examples of responses to feedback are the use of lay members, associate assessors and school nominees.

In practice, an important characteristic of current inspection by Education Scotland is that it 'does something *with* schools', not 'to schools'. Inspection tries to move away from the fixed cycle and to become more agile. The inspection team spends a lot of time engaging with school staff, aiming to be able to tell the story of the school and not just the story of individual quality indicators. After all, learners are in school for life and work, not just for passing exams. The grades given to a school by the inspection team are not in the letter to the parents, because this might get in the way of the story of the school.

The key questions addressed by Education Scotland with respect to performance and improvement of schools are:

1. How well do children / young people learn and achieve?
2. How well does the school support children / young people to learn?
3. How does the school improve the quality of its work?

These are also the major guiding questions in the self-evaluation guide provided to schools by Education Scotland (cf.

[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/genericresource\\_tcm4684382.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/genericresource_tcm4684382.asp)).

To conclude: Scotland has made a very explicit choice to use its inspection to do something with schools and not to schools. Nevertheless newspaper headlines do show that there is also concern about the dual role of the new 'Quango' Education Scotland. There are certain safeguards in place, but it is still an issue.



### Presentation 8

Rick Steur addresses key issues in the long term strategic plan of the Dutch inspectorate (2010 – 2014). In 2009 the Dutch inspectorate, halfway into its reorganization, carried out a SWOT<sup>1</sup> analysis of its own performance. The reorganization followed two parallel tracks: the introduction of the risk-based approach and budget cuts. These developments had quite a strong impact on our relations with schools. The schools felt that we were no longer their 'critical friend', as we used to be in the past.

The SWOT-analysis resulted in a strategic plan for the period 2010 – 2014. The plan defines five

major objectives, three external and two internal objectives:

#### External goals:

1. To strengthen our position in society at large. Activities: interaction with schools and other stakeholders, panels, conferences, efforts to integrate social media into our system.
2. To improve our supervision of the system as a whole. This is where the issue of the school boards comes in. There is a strong parallel here with the local authorities in the Scottish situation. Diversity among the school boards is huge. The boards range from a few volunteers to big professional boards with many schools. A major question we have is whether we should be taking the self-evaluations by the boards seriously.
3. Further development of our supervision of the quality of schools and law compliance by schools. In trying to support innovation by schools, we need to be very careful to remain neutral. We need to supervise the 'what', but we should stay away from the 'how'. In relation to education, 'what' and 'how' are very ideologically loaded terms in our country.

Thus, if we compare recent developments in our two systems, we conclude that Education Scotland has very explicitly decided to 'work with schools', while our approach is 'to work towards schools'.

#### Internal goals:

1. Developing our organization into a challenging and professional work environment. Here, one of our major aims is to strengthen the two major roles of our inspectors: 'connaissanceur' and 'ambassador'.
2. Getting our systems and work processes in order, up to date and aligned with the above developments. Essentially, here we should set an example by doing what we ask schools to do.

To wind up his presentation, Rick Steur mentioned a major dilemma which we are currently facing: is risk-based inspection going to remain our repertoire for the coming years, or should we perhaps be working much harder to help the system improve by investing in the 'middle section' of the schools – those which are not (very) weak but which are not performing very well either. There is probably much to gain by such an approach.



<sup>1</sup> Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.



## Discussion

A point raised in the discussion was the cost and benefit of involving parents. Education Scotland does invest in this, amongst others by sending out a questionnaire to a sample of parents a few weeks before going on an inspection visit. Also, inspectors join meetings with parents. These activities help a lot to understand what people think. Also, it provides for a method of triangulation.

Another issue raised was the quality of self-evaluation. In The Netherlands, school boards are responsible for producing the self-evaluations. So far, their quality is often below standard. Experiences in Scotland are more positive, but it has taken some 25 years to reach this stage, and it is still considered to be a stubborn area of improvement. The general feeling is that one should be realistic and not expect too much of the self-evaluations. A lively but critical process is perhaps more important than the product itself. The most important thing to realize is that quality should be the property of the school.

