

The Inspection of Inspection; research perspectives

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Studies on school inspections



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- Increasing number of studies, particularly in Europe: *Governing by Inspection (Grek et al)*, *ISI-TL (Ehren et al)*, *OECD (synergies for learning)*, *SICI (Gray et al)*, *Hussain (2012)*, *Allen & Burgess (2012)*.
- Inconclusive findings on effects and unintended consequences, some insight into mechanisms of change from inspections.

EU-project



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	The Netherlands	England	Sweden	Ireland	Austria (Styria)	Czech Republic
<i>Frequency of visits</i>						
Cyclical inspections of all schools	Every 4 years	Every 5 years	Every 4-5 years	Every 5 years	Every 2-4 years	Every 3 years
Differentiated inspections	*	*	*			
<i>Standards</i>						
Legal aspects	*	*	*	*	*	*
Context and process quality	*	*	*	*	*	*
Outcomes	*	*				*
Threshold for distinguishing failing schools	*	*				*
<i>Consequences</i>						
(Advising on) sanctions	*	*	*			*
Interventions	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Reporting on individual schools to the general public</i>	*	*		*		

Opening up the black box!



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What does change from school inspections look like?

*Why are they (in)effective, and in which context
(mechanisms and conditions of change)?*

What type of school inspections are effective?

What change?



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What does change look like and when does it occur?

- Direct and indirect impact
- Change = self evaluations, improvement activities, capacity-building; NL: achievement and process indicators
- Different trajectories of change for
 - teachers/principals and
 - failing/good schools

What change?



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Direct impact:

Change occurs 1 year after the inspection visit and seems to last for 2/3 years and then fades out

Visits and feedback

Previous studies: impact on failing schools

What change?



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Indirect impact:

Setting expectations, stakeholder involvement and alignment

Inspected schools report fewer unintended consequences
(threat of inspections causing side effects)

- Schools close to the threshold
- Long-standing high stakes inspection systems
- Impact enhanced by other organizations/activities in the education system
- Stakeholder involvement, particularly in high performing schools

What change?



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Different trajectories of impact:

- Schools in different categories
 - Most improvement activities in failing schools
 - ‘Good’ schools are more open to feedback and have more active stakeholders
 - Schools going from good to failing accept less feedback at first
- Impact seems highest in primary schools and for principals
- Principals and teachers respond differently

Mechanisms of impact



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- Performance feedback
- Setting of expectations (teachers and head teachers in inspection teams)
- Stakeholders' actions (weak secondary schools in NL see decline in student numbers)

Conditions of impact



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Conditions in school inspections/Inspectorates (other studies):

- **Threshold** (Hanushek and Raymond, 2002)
- **Frequency and intensity of visits** (Luginbuhl et al, 2007)
- **Sanctions, rewards, interventions, follow-up visits** (Heubert&Hauser, 1999; Stecher, 2001)
- **Framework** (reliability/validity of assessment; tick and flick approach)
- **Age, stature, credibility of Inspectorate**
- **Inspection style (feedback/communication, etc)** (Ehren, 2006)

Effective inspection models (our study)

Effective inspection practices



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Differentiated, high stakes inspections, evaluation outcomes and processes, reporting on individual schools lead to more changes in:

- Capacity-building
- School and teaching conditions
- Unintended consequences!

(via)

- School self-evaluations
- Stakeholder awareness of inspection reports

Further info



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New project on polycentric inspections:

What is the role of Inspectorates of Education in a self-improving education system?

How can they be effective in enhancing school-to-school (networked) improvement and evaluation?