Inspection and quality assurance in schools

Reforms and Future Trends

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Príomh-Chigire
Overview

- What is best international research telling us about evaluation and assessment?
- How are we changing inspection/evaluation?
- What is inspection telling us about schools?
- Follow-up and schools with serious weaknesses
- A word about school self-evaluation
- Quality assuring the Inspectorate’s work
Lessons from international research

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

• Greater recognition of the importance of evaluation and assessment to generate improvement in school systems
• Greater efforts to inform policy with evidence generated by evaluation and assessment
• Need to build up an integrated framework for evaluation, assessment and quality assurance
Lessons from international research
TYPICAL ELEMENTS IN EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

• An integrated framework covering….
• Student assessment – learner at the centre
• Teacher appraisal – enhancing professionalism
• School evaluation – external inspections and school self-evaluation
• Appraisal of school leaders
• Education system evaluation: including national and international surveys

OECD forthcoming
• Avoid a narrow understanding of the purposes and potential of evaluation and assessment

• “High quality data and accountability of teachers and schools are essential … but it is important to ensure that existing data and information are actually used for improvement.”

• “A key challenge is to find the right balance between the accountability and the improvement functions of evaluation and assessment”.
  – “There is a risk of placing too great a focus on accountability as a result of a strong top-down national vision for evaluation and assessment which constrains the ownership of evaluation and assessment procedures by school agents”. OECD
An integrated approach…

- We want a structure to integrate accountability and improvement
- For example, we need to maintain a balance between:
  - Formative and summative assessment
  - Professional development for teachers and teacher appraisal
  - External inspection and effective self-evaluation
  - Data reporting and improvement action plans for schools
  - National and international surveys and qualitative information about observed practice on the ground
Lessons from international research

• Make sure that evaluation and assessment link directly to improving teaching and learning
  – Foster the motivation of teachers and students
  – Engage educators in continuous improvement of instruction and learning
  – Inspire collective teamwork
  – Affect all teachers and students
  – Play down blatant accountability to get more real accountability
    (Michael Fullan, Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole-System Reform)

• Ultimate objective of evaluation and assessment is to improve students’ learning and teachers’ teaching
REFORMING INSPECTION
So what has been the focus of our strategic development of evaluation?

• Development and roll-out of external inspection models in 2000-09
  – Enormous cultural and practical changes achieved

• BUT…
  – Insufficient coverage of schools because of complexity of models
  – Schools perceiving that school development planning was about recorded plans rather than teaching and learning
  – Insufficient follow-up where weaknesses existed
  – Lack of strong culture of self-evaluation and improvement in schools
  – Lack of use of assessments and assessment data in schools
The Inspectorate gets inspected too!

Review of DES and Inspectorate in 2010:
“While stakeholders expressed very high regard for the professionalism of the Inspectorate’s work and the usefulness of it, they identified the need for higher rates of inspection per school. Ireland lags behind other countries in the frequency of school self-evaluations. Stakeholders also identified the need for stronger structured follow up arrangements where school performance is weak.”

Organisational Review Programme, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, review data collected in 2010
Strategic actions, 2010-2013
EFFECTIVE INSPECTION and ROBUST SELF-EVALUATION

• Reform external evaluation models to:
  – Make models more efficient, reform inspection planning and achieve much better coverage of schools
  – Provide range of inspection models and enable risk-based inspection
  – Place focus on teaching and learning, leadership

• Effective self-evaluation in schools
  – Focussed on teaching and learning
  – Using evidence and assessment to evaluate and change practice
  – Articulate clear standards of best practice for schools
  – Clear statements of best practice

• Support national priorities in literacy and numeracy
  – Underpin the use of assessment data, reporting to parents

• National monitoring and international benchmarking
# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Assurance</th>
<th>External Evaluation</th>
<th>Internal Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>WSE <em>(whole-school evaluation)</em></td>
<td>Incidental / Unannounced Inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjects / Programmes / Thematic</td>
<td>Follow-through Inspection</td>
</tr>
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| School Self-Evaluation | Principal, teachers and board improving their practice |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and learning</th>
<th>Learning outcomes of pupils</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in learning</td>
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## Accountability

External evaluation and internal self-evaluation are complementary functions – focusing on improvement.
Reforming inspection, 2010-2012

- Wider range of new models of inspection
- More authentic inspection in incidental inspections
- Reduced days for each inspection
- Better planning and scheduling of inspections
- Sampling of teachers and/or of curriculum in large schools
- Cross-curricular inspection in schools
- Shorter, more focussed reports
- Better collection of data for analysis
- Change in context

Staff numbers
- Dec 2007 = 166; Dec 2008 = 154; Dec 2011 = 127
- Mar 2012 = 116; Dec 2012 = 124
In the schools....

- Much less documentation required
- Inspection completed in shorter period
- Voice of parents and students through use of questionnaires in all whole-school evaluations
- Elements of self-evaluation now incorporated into whole-school evaluations
- Follow-up: schools tagged for further inspections
- Pilot evaluations in critical new area of early childhood
- Regular evaluations in priority provision – e.g. high support units, special care units, detention schools
- Much better coverage of system generally....
## Inspection activity 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activity</th>
<th>PRIMARY</th>
<th>2nd LEVEL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSE</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject inspection</td>
<td></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-through</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation advisory visits</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centres/ASD/HSU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation (no. of teachers)</td>
<td>2,429</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total numbers of inspections 2010-2012

- 2010: 3,222
- 2011: 3,814
- 2012: 4,085
Impact on inspection coverage

• Coverage of Primary Schools:
  – **2010-2012** – 2,152 inspections conducted in 1,831 schools – 55% of all primary schools – (not including probation visits)

• Coverage of Post-primary Schools:
  – **2011-2012** – 1,643 inspections conducted in 680 schools – 93% of all post-primary schools
LEARNING FROM INSPECTION
Questionnaire data in post-primary schools

- Parent and learner questionnaires 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>8,680</td>
<td>12,893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Asked to respond to a series of statements about the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Parents are very positive about many aspects of the work of post-primary schools

- “Discipline is good in the school”
  - Agree/strongly agree 89.4%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 5.2%
  - Don’t know 5.4%

8,680 responses, provisional
2012 data, subject to confirmation
Parents are very positive about many aspects of the work of post-primary schools

- “The school is well run”
  - Agree/strongly agree 90.2%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 4.5%
  - Don’t know 5.4%

8,680 responses, provisional 2012 data, subject to confirmation
Parents are very positive about many aspects of the work of post-primary schools

- “Overall, I am happy with the school”
  - Agree/strongly agree 90.7%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 4.9%
  - Don’t know 4.3%

8,680 responses, provisional 2012 data, subject to confirmation
Parents are very positive about teaching and learning in the school

- “Teaching is good in the school”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 86.5%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 7.5%
  - Don’t know 6.0%

- “My child is doing well in school”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 93.0%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 4.6%
  - Don’t know 2.3%

- “My child enjoys school”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 87.7%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 3.4%
  - Don’t know 9.0%

8,680 responses; provisional data from 2012, subject to confirmation
Parents’ views can give schools information on aspects of school climate and relationships

- “My child feels safe and looked after in school”
  - Agree/strongly agree 92.0%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 4.1%
  - Don’t know 3.9%

8,680 responses, provisional 2012 data, subject to confirmation
Parents’ views can prompt schools to ask if they communicate effectively with parents

- “I am satisfied with the way bullying is dealt with by the school”
  - Agree/strongly agree 67.4%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 8.7%
  - Don’t know 24.0%

- Why do 24% say they don’t know?

8,680 responses, provisional 2012 data, subject to confirmation
Parents’ views can prompt schools to ask if they communicate effectively with parents

• I am aware of the detail of the Relationships and Sexuality Education policy of the school
  – Agree/Strongly agree 62.4%
  – Disagree/Strongly disagree 11.5%
  – Don’t know 26.1%

• I received helpful advice from the school when my child was choosing subjects
  – Agree/Strongly agree 58.8%
  – Disagree/Strongly disagree 31.2%
  – Don’t know 10.0%

8,680 responses; provisional data from 2012, subject to confirmation
Students are positive about many aspects of their experience in school

• “There is a good atmosphere in the school”
  – Agree/strongly agree
    83.2%
  – Disagree/strongly disagree
    5.5%
  – Don’t know
    11.3%

12,893 responses, provisional
2012 data, subject to confirmation
Students are positive about many aspects of their experience in school

- “I feel safe and cared for in the school”
  - Agree/strongly agree 80.7%
  - Disagree/strongly disagree 6.1%
  - Don’t know 13.1%

- But…Why do 13% not know?

12,893 responses, provisional 2012 data, subject to confirmation
Students are generally positive about many aspects of their experience in school

• “The school deals well with bullying”
  – Agree/strongly agree 69.6%
  – Disagree/strongly disagree 10.7%
  – Don’t know 19.8%

12,893 responses, provisional
2012 data, subject to confirmation
Students are generally positive about teaching & learning but give us food for thought

- “My classes are interesting”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 69.2%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 16.6%
  - Don’t know 14.2%

- “I am getting on well in my school work”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 82.0%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 7.0%
  - Don’t know 10.9%

- “The teachers explain things clearly for me in my classes”
  - Agree/Strongly agree 73.0%
  - Disagree/Strongly disagree 12.7%
  - Don’t know 14.3%

12,893 responses; provisional data from 2012, subject to confirmation
## Learning from inspection: the quality continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Significant strengths</td>
<td>Excellent; of a very high quality; very effective; highly commendable; very good; few areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strengths outweigh weaknesses</td>
<td>Good; valuable; effective practice; competent; some possibilities for improvement exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weaknesses outweigh strengths</td>
<td>Fair; scope for development; experiencing difficulty; evident weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Significant weaknesses</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; ineffective; requiring significant change, development or improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WSE-MLL in post-primary schools 2010-2012  
*(rounded figures, from 193 inspections)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over the three years, 2010, 2011 and 2012</th>
<th>Significant strengths &amp; Strengths outweigh weaknesses (% of schools)</th>
<th>Weaknesses outweigh strengths &amp; Significant weaknesses (% of schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Between 88% and 91%</td>
<td>Between 9% and 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Between 85% and 89%</td>
<td>Between 11% and 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Between 81% and 87%</td>
<td>Between 13% and 17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Provisional data, subject to confirmation*
“Features of very good lessons included high but realisable expectations in terms of appropriate learning objectives and very good teacher preparedness in terms of resources. In these lessons ICT was used well to consolidate learning.”

Extract from WSE-MLL Report
"In these lessons, all students were fully engaged and actively involved in their learning through discussion, directed questioning or well managed peer-learning activities, which promoted learner autonomy and allowed the students to express their opinions. Links were made with previous or future learning and with students’ lives to put learning in context and higher-order questioning ensured that students were challenged."

Extract from WSE-MLL Report
Recommendations about teaching and learning often refer to...

- Opportunities for staff to share good practice
- Teacher talk over-used
- Student engagement in lessons
- Active methodologies
- Cooperative learning
- Differentiation
- Classroom management
- Analysing assessment

- Over-use of exam material
- Higher-order thinking and questioning
- Consistent practices re setting and monitoring homework
- Written formative feedback
- Literacy and numeracy
Recommendations about boards of management often refer to:

- Composition of board
- Strategic vision for the school
- Use of teacher allocations
- Awareness of professional development needs of staff
- Communication: patron, VEC, staff, parents
- Systematic policy development/review
- Compliance with circulars; time in school
- Need to discuss thoroughly issues raised in principal’s report to board
FOLLOW-THROUGH AND DEALING WITH SCHOOLS IN DIFFICULTIES
Follow-through inspections

- Initially FT has been concentrated on schools with most serious weaknesses
- Now implementing FT for other schools
- Purpose of general follow-through inspections
  - evaluate impact of inspection on school improvement
  - determine extent to which recommendations have been implemented
- Model
  - Announced one-day inspection
  - Check progress made on recommendations
  - Provide oral feedback to school/board of management
  - Record summary of findings for internal purposes, including planning of further inspections if necessary
  - Will consult with partners on formal model and written report
Follow-through in schools with serious weaknesses: School Improvement Group

- **Schools Division, Inspectorate and Teacher Education Section working together**

- **Criteria by which schools are selected for reference to SIG:** Significant weaknesses in the overall quality of any or all of the following
  - teaching and learning
  - leadership and management
  - statutory requirements or regulations or codes or practice
  - capacity to implement a programme of improvement
• Responsibility for improvement rests with boards and patrons/trustees

• Actions taken by the SIG to promote improvement include
  – meetings with the school patrons/trustees, chairpersons of boards and/or principals
  – requesting a progress report from the Board of Management
  – further inspections
  – support or intervention from other sections of the Department (e.g. Planning and Building Unit/ Teacher Education Section) or from the professional development support service
  – financial penalties, etc.
  – in some schools, leadership/staff changes have occurred
SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION
What do we want to achieve?

• Robust school self-evaluation in schools
• A shared focus on improvement and ultimately on accountability among principal, teachers and board of management
• A considerable culture change in schools
  – An openness to asking challenging questions about practice and standards
  – Using evidence to make judgements
  – Planning and making changes for improvement
  – Openness with school community: reporting
• A process that minimises the burden on principals and schools
SSE supports other initiatives

- School self-evaluation process supports both *Literacy and Numeracy* and changes to Junior Cycle
- Avoid duplication: the improvement plans for L&N will be generated in the SSE process
- Looking at methodologies, reviewing programmes, planning new programmes will be key in JC reform – SSE gives you a way of working through this
- SSE is just as useful in looking at the student well-being agenda
- SSE changes the focus of professional conversations towards learning and teaching
Getting started

- A reasonable, limited ask to get started
  - Literacy, numeracy and one other area in four years
  - Focus on teaching and learning

- Guidelines for schools
  - Tools to collect evidence on SSE website
  - Checklist for board of management

- CPD sessions for school leaders and advisory visits to schools from inspectors
  - 243 PP schools visited by inspectors by 14 February 2013
  - Have reduced numbers of WSEs in schools in 2013 as a result

- Short report and summary to community
  - Keep paperwork to a minimum and focus on improving practice

- Please share your experiences with us
QUALITY ASSURANCE
We want….

- An integrated approach to quality assurance in the school system
- A balanced approach drawing on best international experience and the needs, state of development and culture of the Irish educational system
- Robust inspection which provides strong accountability to parents and the system and supports an improvement agenda in the school
- Effective, structured school self-evaluation focussed on improvement of teaching and learning and accountability to school community
- Evidence based inspection and self-evaluation
Views about inspection vary.....
“Many teachers despair at the lack of collegiality displayed by some inspectors. It is commonly felt that the lack of practical advice and praise is demoralising for an already demoralised profession who are doing their best to cope with pay cuts, larger classes, less resources, less SNA support and the inclusion of a wide range of pupils with SEN and ESL pupils in mainstream classes…….”
Another teacher’s view

“I’ve had an incidental visit, and when I got over the initial shock, I was pleasantly surprised at how supportive it was.”
“Schools are isolated communities and so it is great to have a relatively objective eye to come and visit and to see what is working well, what can work better and that public funds are being properly expended.”

“I have personally expressed my gratitude to both inspectors for their management of the evaluation process, and I am confident that [school name] will be a better teaching and learning environment because of this evaluation.”
“The WSE MLL experience was both positive and empowering and the evaluation process was a very supportive and beneficial experience for the whole school community.”
“.....from a very low base, Ireland has been moving in the right direction in the past decade or so. This is evident in the increasing emphasis of the Inspectorate on the need for schools to identify performance objectives, undertake regular self-evaluation, involve parents and pupils in the monitoring processes, and the requests by visiting inspectors to see evidence of these practices, as well as the recent design of materials to support these activities.”

National Economic and Social Council (NESC) 2012
We want to learn from our own regular quality assurance processes....

- Regular consultation with partners on all developments in inspection (ongoing)
- Ongoing professional development for inspectors
- Reviewing follow-through inspections
- Post-evaluation questionnaires for teachers and principals (in development)
- Post-evaluation questionnaires for boards of management and parents’ councils (planned)
- Formal complaints process (in operation)
- Greater publication of findings from inspections and from our own quality assurance surveys (planned)
To live up to our aim:

“Feabhas na foghlama a chur chun cinn”
“Promoting the quality of learning”