

Reconstructing Middle Level Organizations

The Inspection & Evaluation of Schools

An SEE-ECN Conference

1. Introduction

Educators from across Southeastern Europe attended this conference. They came from: Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. The Kosovo contingent consisted of Milica Kostadinović of KEDP, Mr. Marko Radulović, a Serb school inspector employed by the UN and David Lynn, Project Director of KEDP.

The purpose of this report is to identify issues and training resources that MEST needs to consider as it reintroduces the role of 'inspector.' The report is not a summary of the Conference.

2. Valuable Contacts for MEST

Name	Title	Contact Information
Paul Blendia	Senior Researcher Institute for Educational Sciences	Bucharest, Romania
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Dr. Johan C. van Bruggen	Deputy Chief Inspector Dutch Inspectorate of Education (staff inspector), Former Secretary of SICI (October 1995 till March 2000)	

Carmo Climaco is the current president of The Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education: "SICI." It is an international organization of inspectors from Western European countries. James Cuthbert is its current Secretary-General. Both are excellent resource people.

SICI produces a 'blue book,' which contains all the various practices presently in use in Western European countries. It is currently under revision. Its section on recruitment of inspectors is particularly valuable at this time. This and other resources are available at: www.sici.org.uk.

Among the best inspectorate programs in the world are ones in Hong Kong and Lower Saxony in Germany.

3. Lessons for Kosovo to Consider

Inspectorates in Western European countries tend to work in three domains:

- Administrative/Managerial
- Support to Schools
- Inspections and Evaluations

These three domains are reflected in eight major tasks normally performed by inspectors:

1. Checking for compliance with laws, instructions, policies, and rules.
2. Stimulating the improvement of schools by supporting innovations.
3. Administering budgets, buildings and staffs.
4. Helping/advising with various elements of training teachers and directors.
5. Evaluating national educational projects or aspects of the state of the art in....(name the topic; e.g., attendance of Girls in High School).
6. Evaluating the quality of individual schools.
7. Reporting the results of evaluations.
8. Advising the authorities on what to do as a consequence of the evaluation.

There are always administrative managerial duties to be performed by inspectors. However, some Southern and Eastern European jurisdictions tend overload inspectors with these responsibilities at the cost of the other two domains. There is controversy amongst inspectors of different countries as to whether or not inspectors can appropriately perform a support and follow-up role for schools. In all countries the stated overall role of the inspectorate is to contribute to school quality. These three phenomenon suggest that Kosovo needs to be very clear in terms of what it intends its inspectors to achieve particularly if MEST intends that the process of inspection is to contribute to an improved quality of schooling.

3.1 The Fundamental Issues of the Inspectorate – Independence & Integrity

The first major issue to be dealt with is whether or not the inspectorate ought to be part of the Ministry or independent from it. The trend in Northern European countries is for it to be independent of the Ministry because it acts in a similar fashion to that of an auditor-general for government: This means, in part, it holds the Ministry accountable for the administration of its laws, instructions, policies and rules. Where the inspectorate is not independent, there is a strong tendency to violate the integrity of the inspection process by ministry authorities or even the Minister if the results of an evaluation are not flattering. As they discovered in Romania, *when the Ministry of Education is both the player and the referee, the Ministry cannot be held to account*. Further, in both Romania and Portugal, a change of government led to a wholesale change of inspectors. Unskilled and unknowledgeable people replaced those who had received comprehensive training and knew how to perform the role with objectivity and professionalism.

3.2 What Role for the Inspectors?

What is it that MEST intends the Inspectors to accomplish? What contribution are they to make to the quality of education? How does it expect inspectors to go about their work? Answering these questions is central to developing a competent cadre of inspectors who make a difference to the quality of learning experience lived by pupils and to the standard of their achievement.

Does MEST intend inspectors to:

- Ensure compliance with the laws, etc.?
- Inspect and evaluate individual teachers?
- Inspect and evaluate schools or departments of schools?
- Inspect programs or, programs and personnel?
- Establish indicators of quality for teaching, curriculum implementation, schools, etc.?
- Follow-up inspections?
- Assist schools to improve the quality of service received by students?
- Inspect and evaluate issues that affect many schools like curriculum implementation or girls in education or student-teacher relations, etc.?
- Report on evaluations and inspections?

3.3 What are the Most Important Characteristics of Inspectors in the View of MEST?

Defining the role and responsibilities of inspectors will determine the specific characteristics required of inspectors. As it recruits individuals to fill the role of inspector it needs to select from the following list the qualifications and qualities it wishes its inspectors to have. Characteristics commonly looked for by Western European nations include:

- Good judgment!
- The ability to be objective.
- Successful experience as a classroom teacher and school administrator.
- Knowledge of teaching and learning and current related research.
- Knowledge of effective schools and current related research.
- Knowledge and experience with educational and organizational change.
- Knowledge of one's own 'mental screens' that usually cause one to pre-judge situations or judge them in a biased fashion.
- The ability to have positive working relationships with peers, Ministry officials, school personnel, parents and members of the public.
- Extraordinary communication skills, both formal and informal.
- Leadership qualities.
- Problem solving abilities.
- An ability to cope with pressure and stress.
- Sensitivity to the school, ministerial and political environment.
- Information handling schools - ICT.

- The ability to self-evaluate.

3.4 The Unique Challenges of the Inspectorate

Clearly articulating standards and differentiation amongst the levels of achievement related to standards is more difficult than it appears. There is little in human or organizational performance that is simply right or wrong, good or bad. Most situations fit along a continuum between these polarities. Therefore, the inspectorate is faced with these challenges:

- Clarifying expectations.
- Judging whether things are “good enough.”
- Discriminating amongst levels of achievement.
- Articulating levels of achievement such that individual inspectors would evaluate a school or individual and reach similar conclusions.
- Retaining objectivity.
- Establishing a common understanding of terminology and its application in practice amongst those affected by the process of inspection.
- Ensuring that systems and processes of inspection are objective, valid and reliable.
- Being able to understand the impact of context on school or individual performance.
- Evaluating a large number of elements that affect performance like, staff, school finance, management, policies, outcomes and processes like audit trails, etc.

3.5 What Infrastructure Needs do Inspectors Have?

Inspections occur at the site of the action: schools. Therefore, inspectors need to spend the majority of their time in schools. Consequently, they need transportation. Because they are out of the office they need access to good secretarial services and because their role requires formal reporting they need access to computers. Because they need to learn so much about the work of teachers, schools, administrators and the Ministry, they need constant and regular in-service training. Without these supports the likelihood that inspectors will make a significant contribution to educational quality is highly unlikely.