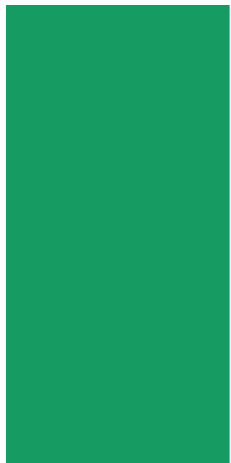


# A tale of two countries



# Overview

- iQerel
- (Re)Looking at school evaluation
- Methods used in the study
- Findings – Ireland and Norway
- Considerations

# An Erasmus + project

- International Quality Evaluation Resource for Education Leaders (iQerel)
- Partnership between England, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Spain
- Online interactive evaluation support for school to focus on broader more holistic outcomes of schools
- Support for **three** areas under development
  - Ethical Practice
  - Learning
  - Well Being
- State of the art report on school evaluation in each of the counties

# Current discourse/ practice

- Oppositional view of evaluation and inspection – binaries (accountability/ improvement; external/ internal; critical friend/ “forensic fault finder”)
- Broader perspectives on purpose; narrow views on impact in use
- Fundamentally linked to values about what is important in education.
- Evaluation and what it does and how it is done mirrors / shapes/ frames these values
- Can have a narrowing impact on the breadth of student experience/curriculum

# A process of producing 'truths'

- In the process of seeing an evaluation of practice it can simplify, alter, reimagine and reshape it
- Evaluations are rhetorical work – linguistically constructing a version of schools – arguably underpinned by the political goals that are to be achieved
- Education policy and practice change in and through evaluation processes and outcomes (Lindgren 2013)

# Key considerations

- **Evaluations are ideological;** Regulate the relationship between the visible and the invisible, the imaginable and the non imaginable particularly as it relates to questions about good education, good schools and what it means to improve
- **Qualitative evaluation/judgment** is at the core of the activity which raises questions about the articulation of knowledge and power
- **Embodied in the inspector** themselves – a distinctive type of agent who embodies inspectorial knowledge, judgment and authority – historically framed experience and expertise

# A different focus (Bernstein)

- Evaluation- A key element in the pedagogic device; provides a way of analysing the processes by which expert (inspectors) knowledge is converted or pedagogised to constitute school knowledge
- A very powerful lens for exploring the work of school evaluation
- Current focus on evaluation and inspection as a force of recontextualisation – shifting priorities and practice in schools

# Analytical framework

- Broad framework to conduct this examination of school evaluation and the recontextualisation of school practice.
- These three areas loosely correspond to the well used typology in curriculum studies i.e. the intended, implemented and attained or achieved (see Akker,1998).
- Framework has been used in the past to examine curriculum change
- Proved to be effective in situations where there are identified 'major gaps between ideals and outcomes' (ibid, p.6).



# More or less «hidden» functions in school evaluations?

- On the level of intentions: equity, social justice, inclusion, development vs. sustaining capitalism, sorting students and schools, control
- On the level of implementation: dialogue, teacher/student voice vs. expertise, structuring artefacts
- On the level of the school: winners and losers; agency vs. compliance; engagement vs. despondency

# Recontextualisation

## Intended

- Intentions as specified in structures, systems, materials and documentation relating to inspection/evaluation

## Implemented

- The process of evaluation and inspection/ the dialogic space in school between the evaluator and the teacher/ head (evaluation/inspection-in-action)

## Achieved

- At school level: The impact of evaluation on:
  - student attainment
  - student experience
  - teaching, learning and leading
  - curriculum provision

# Method

- Analysis of documents relating to school evaluation – official discourse related to evaluation (intended)
- Interviews with headteachers/principals to establish their experiences of the evaluation process and their views in relation to the impact of evaluation on school practice (implemented and achieved)



# Irish Inspectorate

- **Evaluate and advise- The Education Act (1998)**
  - Implications for the quality of processes of evaluation and the expertise of the inspector and the legitimacy of the advice
- A mix of **External Evaluation** and **School Self Evaluation** – but not reconciled with each other
- **Four key principles**
  - A focus on learners
  - Development and improvement
  - Respectful engagement
  - Responsibility and accountability



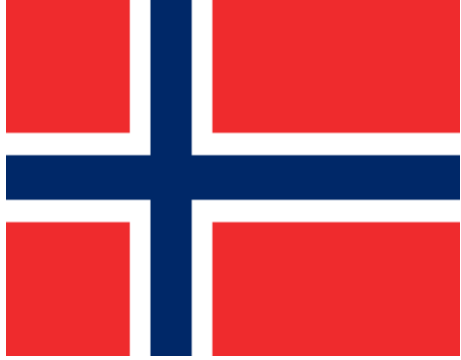
# Inspections in Norway

- **School based evaluation:** each school must regularly evaluate how the schools' activities contribute to goal attainments (regulations to Education Act, § 2-1)
- **National regular inspections:** Teams appointed by the County Governors offices conduct inspections to check that schools' activities are in compliance with the law (Education Act § 14-1)



# Ireland

- **School improvement** is stated as core – sharing good practice in and between schools and mediating the outcome of evaluations in policy change and development
- **Legal compliance** more targeted recently
- **Accountability**
  - ...Provide the public with an assurance of the quality of teaching and learning
  - ...report objectively and fairly on the quality of education provision, based on the collection of objective, dependable, high-quality data, having taken the context of the school or settings into consideration



# Norway

- **School improvement** is a core in school based evaluations. Schools decide area for evaluation, and the main purpose is to promote school based learning. Inclusion of teachers all parts of the work is required, inclusion of students is recommended.
- **Legal compliance** is controlled by teams of inspectors in the national regular inspections
- **Accountability**
  - ...Provide the public with an assurance that students legal rights are protected and that schools fulfil their legal duties
  - ...Results from the Quality Assessment System (e.g. national tests, exam results, student surveys) typically are part of the data collected in both school based evaluations and inspections.



# Policy language across the two countries...



- partnership;
- professional dialogue;
- ‘promote trust in our working relationships with others’;
- respect;
- positive engagement;
- ‘open about our evaluation models, activities, criteria and priorities’;
- ‘consultative, co- professional engagement between the inspector and relevant school management and staff’.







# Ireland: Processes- the implementation

- Leaders generally positive about how inspection is conducted ( in line with other studies)
- Some idiosyncratic practices continue:
  - ‘it depends on the inspector’
- A sense that ‘on the ground’ inspectors lack autonomy
  - ‘ they have to tick the boxes’
  - ‘she sat there clicking away on her laptop basically filling in the form with my answers – not my idea of what they should do but they have their masters’
- Checking up/ out to catch the school out – follow through and on the spot/ drive by inspections - very negative views among leaders and leaders report that teachers are very hostile to drive by inspections in particular



# Norway: Processes- the implementation

- Leaders generally positive about inspection
- Some new practices are time consuming and over complex:
  - ‘it is a big apparatus for the school – we have to find time for interviews, collect and copy documents. At times I think is it worth it? But yes’
- Inspection practice is getting better
  - ‘they have had some experience and found out what’s a better approach’
- Generally, the principals acknowledge the inspectors’ legitimacy. Sometimes they find that the comments made in the reports are focused on what the school considers to be insignificant issues that they view as no big deal.
- Inspections are currently very low stakes.



# Ireland: + Impact

- Positive outcomes identified by school leaders
  - A focus on learning in schools –very evident in recent review of DEIS \*
  - Leaders of learning – a real concern with learning among leaders in disadvantaged schools evident in how leaders now talk about their work, priorities etc.
- Challenging some negative practices – especially streaming/banding/ setting
- A tidy up of affairs – encourages schools to bring closure to some long standing issues



# Norway : + Impact

- Positive outcomes
  - A combination of guidance and inspection has led to fewer breaches of regulations
  - Inspections may function as drivers for change
  - Awareness of upcoming inspections may also be drivers for change
- Challenging some negative practices – especially concerning special needs education and the psychosocial environment
- A tidy up of affairs – encourages schools to bring closure to some long standing issues
- The tools developed for preparation for inspection help schools ensure that things are in order, even when there is no upcoming inspection



# Discursive gaps –

## Rhetoric versus reality

- More evident in Irish context
- Openness, trust ... not evident
- Dialogue ... not evident
- Quality of judgment/ legitimacy of judge- issues here
- Inspecting equivalence/ equivalent inspection
  - Quality of evidence – what is provided and how it is interpreted
  - Striving to claim certainty, truth and objectivity
  - Despite formalization of inspection processes judgements, points, templates, manuals as well as ongoing internal review are intended to secure equivalent judgments

# Some concerns

- In Ireland all staff impacted because of the evaluation of classroom practice
- Sometimes leads to a dual reality- one for the inspector and the other reflecting the real life of the school
  - Performance, pageantry and gaming
    - Beating the system – identify from other reports what the hot issues are and make sure these are done – a normative force
    - Drive by – the teaching practice lesson in the bag – ‘the first teacher is the only one really caught’
    - Can have a narrowing impact on the breadth of student experience/curriculum
- In Norway ,classroom practice is not directly observed –teachers are marginal to the inspection process the main impact is on the leaders who are centrally involved
- The key difference between two systems

# Some convergence re evidence of learning

- Students have a legal right to an education that meets their needs and interests in both countries.
- In Ireland – classroom visits are an intrinsic part of evaluation (historical)
- In Norway – now that inspectors are looking at this part of the legislation they will need to focus on classroom practice. Interview to access this data at present.

# Internal/ External Evaluations

- Some convergence here
- Both internal and external tools and framework serve to direct schools attention in specific direction. Normative impact are provided have. Seen as neutral devises that help schools and scaffold evaluation. Little recognition of the normative and narrowing dimesions



# Conclusion

- Some commonalities and some differences partly explained by historical legacy but more visibly attributable to neo-liberal influences on forms of accountability
- **Low stakes inspection Norway / Higher stakes in Ireland – this impacts everything else.**
- Different models of publication – Norway difficult to compare schools – an ‘growth industry’ in Ireland where schools are actively developing strategies to do this.
- Intended – similar focus and aims
- Process – different – but some crossovers. Some issues with time and focus in both countries
- Achieved- Both have a strong focus on outcome and providing evidence of outcomes (paperwork)
- Here greater divergence – related to the stakes of the inspection. In Norway - Positive on the legal matters and internal evaluation as it relates to what the schools decide themselves
- In Ireland more problematic and developing a more normative in schools