



MAT assessment: two case studies

Case study one: inspection and assessment in the Netherlands

The Inspectorate's approach

The governing body is responsible for the quality of education at its schools, which is why the Inspectorate's regulation starts and ends there. They distinguish between the basic quality (statutory criteria) and the governing body's own ambitions (i.e. the quality aspects that they themselves have defined). They ensure that the basic quality is in order. In addition, they encourage governing bodies and schools to pursue their ambitions and achieve improvements above and beyond the level of basic quality.

The four basic principles of regulation

1. The Inspectorate's supervision keeps in dovetail with the governing body's responsibilities.
2. The Inspectorate safeguards statutory quality and encourages governing bodies, schools and educational programmes/institutes to pursue their own quality ambitions
3. All governing bodies are inspected every four years. Additionally, all schools and educational programmes/institutes are inspected every four years in different ways
4. Follow-up inspections depend on the Inspectorate's assessment of the governing body's system of quality assurance.

This assessment consists of:

- the annual analysis of students' achievements
- the four-yearly inspection of governing bodies and school

Four-yearly inspection of governing bodies and schools

The inspections of governing bodies always cover quality assurance and financial management.

During the four-yearly inspection of a governing body and its schools, the Inspectorate pays site visits to some of the schools falling under the governing board's responsibility. They conduct different inspections of the other schools in which they focus on mapping out a specific topic.

They also conduct interim inspections if they detect risks at a school during the annual performance analysis or in response to specific signals that they receive. By pursuing this strategy, they keep every school in the picture.

They may conduct any of the following inspections at schools:

- The verification inspection assesses whether the governing body's quality assurance system actually work in practice.
- If they suspect that the quality of a school is inadequate they conduct an inspection into risks.
- On the request of the governing body, they may also inspect schools that the governing body feels are deserving a rating of 'Good' the overall judgment 'Good'. This is subject to the condition that the school must first complete a self-evaluation.

At the heart of the four-yearly inspection are the following questions:

1. Does educational quality receive sufficient emphasis and are measures in place to improve educational quality?
2. Is there a professional quality culture in place and is the governing body characterized by transparency and integrity?
3. Does the governing body pursue an active policy of communication on its own performance and developments and the performance of its schools and the developments taking place there?
4. Is the financial management sound?

What is involved in a four-yearly inspection of a governing body and its schools?

A. Expert analysis

All four-yearly inspections of a governing body and its schools start with an expert analysis of the information available to the Inspectorate about the governing body and the relevant schools or programmes. The governing body is not required to supply new information for the purposes of the expert analysis.

B. Initial meeting with the governing body

During the initial meeting with the governing body, they ask them to give a presentation on the schools' performance and developments. They then compare the presentation to the results of their own analysis, which is based on the annual monitoring activities. These activities provide them with a preliminary picture of quality assurance, educational quality and financial management.

C. Inspection plan

They then use the result of the expert analysis and the initial meeting to formulate an inspection plan in which they describe their activities in the various phases of the inspection, both at governance level and at the school level. The plan specifies which schools they will inspect for verification purposes and the standards they will focus on. They

also indicate in the plan whether they intend to conduct an inspection into risks or whether they intend to assess a school for a rating of 'Good'.

They use the result of the initial meeting to formulate a tailor made inspection plan. The plan specifies which schools they will inspect for verification purposes and the standards they will focus on. They coordinate to the greatest degree possible with the governing body on the scheduling and organization of the inspection activities.

D. Inspection of the governing body

In the preparatory phase, they have already formed a preliminary picture of quality assurance, quality of education and financial management. They now focus on these aspects in practice. Do they serve to guarantee the quality and continuity of education? Does the quality assurance system encourage continued improvement? What are the ambitions of the governing body and the schools? To answer these questions they speak with a number of stakeholders, such as quality assurance officers, school administrators or coordinators. In addition, they hold an interview with the governing body, the internal supervisor and the participatory body. During this interview, they review the preliminary judgements of the schools they have inspected.

E. Inspection at schools

The Inspectorate physically visits schools to conduct inspections at school level in accordance with the inspection plan and by making use of an assessment framework. A key principle is that they always draw on multiple sources when formulating conclusions. They discuss their initial findings with the designated individuals at the school immediately following the inspection.

They endeavour to forge a connection with the way the school perceives itself as formulated in the school plan. Schools can give more nuance to this perception by giving a presentation at the start of the inspection, enabling the team to paint a complete picture of the state of affairs at the school. What is the school's vision, what are its ambitions and goals, what results has the school achieved? The contents of the presentation are completely up to the school. The task is to listen, watch and ask questions. They also look at how the information provided links to the school plan.

F. Final meeting and report

After the inspection the Inspectorate prepares a draft report containing the results of the entire inspection, both at governance level and at the school level. They report on verification inspections in two ways. At the level of the governing body, they use the results to substantiate judgements in the areas of quality assurance and ambition. The results at the level of school or programme are contained in a separate section: here, they present and substantiate their judgements based on the predefined standards.

They discuss the draft report during the final meeting with the governing body. During this discussion, they identify things that are being done right prior to focusing on the points for improvement. They ask the governing body what they intend to do with the results of the

inspection. Following the discussion of the final report with the governing body, they correct any factual inaccuracies and amend the report as necessary. The final report also specifies the follow-up regulation and the governing body's role in this process. The report is a public document and is published on their website.

G. Feedback meeting at the school

It is their intention that the governing bodies and the schools/programmes not only acknowledge the veracity of the judgements and assessments, but that they use the reports as points of reference for further development. The governing body may request a feedback meeting prior to the final meeting to discuss these topics. In some cases, these two meetings will be combined in a single session. Schools that they have inspected due to potential risks may also request a feedback meeting following the site inspection. They will then meet with the school administrator and teachers to provide substantiation of the findings emanating from the inspection, and they will answer any questions they may have.

H. Follow-up regulation

They use the results of the four-yearly inspection to specify the structure of the follow-up regulation of the governing body and the schools/programmes. Their judgement of financial management and quality assurance is the determining factor for the severity of the follow-up regulation. The more positive the judgement, the lighter the follow-up regulation. They intensify their follow-up regulation if the governing body fails to demonstrate a sufficient grasp of finances or of quality assurance and improvement.

In principle, they make agreements with the governing body regarding follow-up regulation for a period of four years. These agreements can be amended in the interim, depending on the remediation of any shortcomings and potential new improvements as disclosed during annual monitoring activities. In general, they distinguish between four scenarios, depending on the judgements and findings.

1. Quality assurance in order and no shortcomings at schools and/or the governing body: confidence – no follow-up regulation required.
2. Quality assurance in order, shortcomings detected: agreements with the governing body regarding its role in follow-up regulation.
3. Quality assurance not in order: the Inspectorate conducts remedial inspections in all cases.
4. Financial management not in order: combination of scenarios.

Regulation of financial management

The Inspectorate's regulation of financial management is an integral part of the regulation of educational quality.

The assessment of the governing body's financial management results in a judgement on continuity and legitimacy. These aspects may be judged as adequate or inadequate.

They assess the governing body's current financial condition to arrive at a judgement on continuity. They also assess the governing body's understanding of its current financial

condition and of likely developments over the next three years, along with the policies it has developed for this period.

In assessing legitimacy, the aim is to ascertain whether the governing body acts transparently and with integrity, and whether it properly accounts for the way it secures and spends its funding from the central government. The institution's own accountant is primarily responsible for auditing this. In most cases, the Inspectorate can rely on the accountant's report.

At this point, they do not yet judge efficiency. They do, however, assess whether the institution is allocating its government funding to the benefit of its own ambitions regarding effective education and the development of all of its pupils. The ambitions must be specified in the school plan. They discuss this with the governing body and they report on findings.

Regulation of financial management focuses on the following questions:

- Is the governing body's financial condition sound enough for it to continue to provide good education? (continuity of education)
- Do the institutions receive the maintenance funding they are entitled to, and are their expenditures proper and correct? (the legitimacy of the acquisition and expenditure of maintenance funding)

The Inspectorate annually (more often if necessary) assesses whether any financial risks are present at governing bodies or institutions that could jeopardize the continuity of education.

The governing bodies send their annual report to the Education Executive Agency (DUO) by 1 July. The Inspectorate carries out an automatic risk detection procedure on the institutions' key financial indicators. If these indicators are below certain values, then there may be a financial risk. In this case, they will conduct further analysis. They occasionally detect risks after receiving a notification.

Annual performance analysis

They conduct an annual performance analysis of every school or institution based on the information available to the Inspectorate about the governing body and the schools or programmes.

They look at a number of factors, including pupils' learning outcomes and developmental progress. They also examine developments in enrolments and staffing, along with the governing body's annual report. They analyse the data gleaned from these sources at least once a year. They also consider any signals received from teachers, parents, pupils or other sources. They conclude their analysis if they do not detect any risks. In this case, the governing board will not hear from us. If they do suspect risks, then they will conduct an expert analysis. The annual analysis also serves as the basis for the four-yearly inspection of the governing body and the schools.

Case study two: Charter School Evaluation

(Drawn from Sass, J. *Charter School Evaluation: Trends, Challenges, and Prospects*)

A charter school is a public school established upon the basis of a charter. The charter is an extensive, performance contract with an authoriser. Authorising entities vary by state, but commonly include local and county school boards, public universities, and mayors' offices.

A school's charter typically includes descriptions of plans for its educational program, measureable student outcomes, assessment procedures, admissions policies, governance, personnel policies, health and safety procedures, and other elements. Authorisers approve charters for a limited term, often five years. Based on accountability standards, the authoriser usually renews the charter at the end of its term.

Groups of schools

Once a group earns a charter, that group can either manage its own schools or contract with another organisation (a school management organisation or SMO) to manage the schools.

The SMO creates and oversees charter schools, supervising all that occurs within school walls, from curriculum to culture. The charter organisation monitors the SMO. The charter organisation will sometimes have a "portfolio model," partnering with SMOs that align with the charter organisation's mission and vision.

The renewal process

As renewal procedures and requirements reflect state laws, they differ from state to state. However, categories tend to be fairly consistent:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Has the school been faithful to the terms of its charter?

Is the school an academic success?

There are two dimensions to assessing a charter school's academic program. The first is student performance. The second, applied by a fraction of the authorisers, involves evaluating the academic program itself (e.g., curriculum and instruction).

Charter schools, as public schools, are required to participate in state testing programs. In addition to these requirements, a small number of authorisers also apply techniques similar to those used in large-scale policy evaluations. These may include value-added analysis of test-score growth at the student level, comparisons to the schools the charter school students would have attended, and comparisons to nearby and/or demographically similar schools.

Is the school an effective, viable organisation?

In addition to creating and implementing its academic program, a charter school also has financial and operational responsibilities beyond those of a traditional public school.

Although charter schools' financial independence can differ between states and types of charter schools, the typical charter school has a lot of financial independence and accountability. The most common requirements for charter schools are to submit to regular audits and to use "generally accepted accounting practices."

Authorisers also seek to ensure financial health and sound financial management. Specific topics include budgeting and planning, internal controls, staff and board capacity for financial management, maintaining an adequate source of income through enrolment and attendance, and meeting financial obligations (i.e., paying bills on schedule).

There are also governance and operations responsibilities unique to charter schools. Most charter schools have a board (independent of the authoriser) and full responsibility for personnel decisions. An authoriser might evaluate a board in terms of its membership and capacities (e.g., educational administration, legal, financial), frequency of meetings, board agendas and minutes, and involving parents and/or teachers. As instruction is the core activity of a school, instructional leadership, faculty qualifications, and human resources are other common criteria for evaluating a school's organizational viability. Parent satisfaction with the school also is a common criterion.

Has the school been faithful to the terms of its charter?

In addition to legal and regulatory compliance, this category is where some authorisers assess the school's pursuit of the unique commitments it made in the charter. By the nature of chartering, it is difficult—if not impossible—to spell out these criteria in a renewal policy or protocol. Each charter school makes its own commitments, and accountability criteria must respond to those commitments. Specific commitments in charters can include the vision and mission, educational program, governance structure, parent involvement, student services, and enrolment.