OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education

School Evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

**Claire Shewbridge, Marian Hulshof,
Deborah Nusche and Louise Stoll**

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Executive summary

Flemish schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy and are free to develop their own educational policies, including curriculum, assessment, certification and any self-evaluation activities. However, in order to be able to award official qualifications or to receive funding, schools must meet certain conditions set by the Flemish authorities, including: following a core curriculum (attainment targets or developmental objectives according to the stage or type of education); and allowing the Flemish authorities to assure their quality (this is done via the Inspectorate). However, all schools belong to an educational network and may choose to use a curriculum and/or tests developed by the different umbrella organisations within these networks.

Partly in response to international evidence on some entrenched inequities within the Flemish school system, the Flemish authorities have developed policies to promote school improvement. Notably, the Decree on Quality of Education in 2009 clarifies that schools are responsible for providing good quality education and for monitoring their quality. This follows a series of initiatives to stimulate school self-evaluation activities, *e.g.* performance feedback to schools participating in the National Assessment Programme (this monitors only a sample of schools, but other schools can choose to administer parallel versions of the test) and some specific funding for schools includes evaluation requirements. Since 2009, the Inspectorate has adopted a "differentiated" approach to focus inspections on schools most in need of this, as well as on specific school priorities. Further, all school inspection reports are published on line. Importantly, the authorities recognise the importance of increased collaboration within and among schools and have introduced requirements for stakeholder participation within schools, as well as offering additional resources and/or organisational benefits to schools for joining a "school community". The top priorities to further promote school evaluation for improvement in the Flemish Community of Belgium are listed below.

Clarify the goals of school evaluation and how different types of evaluation fit together

The quality of teaching and learning should be at the heart of self-evaluation and inspection activities. One way to promote a common understanding of the key factors influencing teaching and learning is to ensure that the goals, indicators and criteria used in both inspection and self-evaluation are sufficiently similar. If evaluation priorities are not clear, there is a risk that schools develop self-evaluation activities only to satisfy demands for external accountability during inspection. Inspection could include the validation of school-based processes for teacher appraisal (holding the school principal accountable as necessary). Further, inspectors would benefit from systematic access to documentation on school principal appraisals. It is critical to strengthen the links between school self-evaluation and teaching quality, *e.g.* by widening the focus of teacher appraisal and adapting job descriptions to include appropriate aspects of school

self-evaluation. Classroom observation should play a prominent role in teacher appraisal and feedback and teachers could more systematically seek feedback from students on their teaching. Finally, the results of teacher appraisal should be connected to the school's professional development plan.

Continue to invest in school leader and teacher capacity to conduct evaluation and use its results for improvement

Pedagogical Advisory Services support to schools is instrumental to improving school outcomes. As such, it is imperative to evaluate the quality of the services they provide, in particular how they evaluate the support they offer to develop school "policy-making capacity". The quality of school self-evaluation rests, to a large extent, on the quality of school leaders and their capacity to make effective policies for school improvement. School self-evaluation can be given more prominence by: developing a common set of leadership competencies including reference to self-evaluation and policy-making competencies as part of the commitment to school improvement; plus evaluating specific evaluation and enquiry competency development needs for school leaders and providing related professional development. Further, a new position of "evaluation co-ordinator" at a senior level in each school might create an evaluation plan with the school principal, identify and advise on self-evaluation instruments, oversee their use, collate and analyse the data, and facilitate their interpretation and use by school staff. Teachers would benefit from further support in their initial education and ongoing professional development to become part of a professional learning community, where collaborative enquiry and data use for whole-school improvement is the norm. Greater co-operation between the different networks' Pedagogical Advisory Services, drawing on each other's experience and expertise, would help provide a more coherent and consistent offer. Finally, there is strong potential to build evaluation capacity via a more structured promotion of emerging partnerships among schools as "critical friends".

Increase the objectivity of evaluation procedures and ensure they promote improvement and excellence

One way to raise school aspirations is to clarify the common goals and expectations to promote excellence and continuous improvement, *e.g.* by developing a clearer set of criteria describing how students typically progress through their learning in each subject area and providing examples of typical student work at each stage of learning. Assessment based on these learning progressions could be used by teachers and schools to measure growth in student performance, that is, emphasising student improvement and not just whether or not they have achieved minimum standards. Further, a comprehensive review of all tools currently available to schools for their self-evaluation and a mapping of the different purposes, advantages and limitations of each tool should highlight their potential to measure student progress and the added value that the school brings given the students' background characteristics and prior learning. Finally, there is a need to develop objective and clear inspection criteria for each pillar of quality education: respecting the rules and regulations; quality assurance; and capacity to establish good policy. The Inspectorate should draw up operational descriptions for the quality criteria and use scores or labels (*e.g.* excellent, good, fair, weak) to evaluate the criteria. Such clarifications will make it easier to be transparent about the weight given to each of the inspection criteria in forming a judgement on school quality. This will be of considerable

use in further clarifying that school self-evaluation capacity is a core component of its educational quality. Schools that develop high quality self-evaluation practices will have greater capacity to sustain high performance and respond to current and emerging issues. The development of clear inspection criteria would also allow the analysis of trends and typical patterns in the inspection scores given by different inspectors, thereby ensuring more consistency in inspection judgements.

Increase the use of information (collected at either the school level or by the Flemish authorities) for both internal and external school evaluation

The proposal to give schools access to information in the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse offers the opportunity to highlight the Context-Input-Process-Output (CIPO) inspection framework, and feed into school self-evaluation activities, allowing schools to benchmark against schools with similar context and input factors. There is a need for the Inspectorate to collaborate more closely with schools around the use of the indicators and quality criteria in the CIPO model and to develop an accessible and shared language for evaluation and quality in order to better align self-evaluation activities with inspection. A simplified language for school evaluation will also help better communicate inspection results to the broader public in tandem with a specific website for a broader public presenting clear information on schools. Also, the Inspectorate could go further in presenting reports for groupings of schools, thus giving the public a comparative overview. Further, the Inspectorate could conduct a thematic inspection on issues such as constructive use of data, effective classroom observation and development of school improvement plans. Plus, Pedagogical Advisory Services could collect information on good school practices in these areas. There seems an urgent need to establish a protocol whereby schools provide on an annual basis selected data on student performance from their chosen monitoring systems. Currently, the Inspectorate lacks key information on the output part of the CIPO inspection framework, as it does not have regular performance information for schools on which to base its risk assessment. Further, objective performance data play a critical role in monitoring equity within an education system and further ways could be found to collect more information to support school evaluation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Schooling in the Flemish Community of Belgium

Schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy, but to have the right to award official qualifications or receive funding, they must meet certain conditions

Education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 18 in the Flemish Community of Belgium and most young people complete this in primary and secondary schools. Schooling is organised in four main stages, with the first streaming of children into different types of education at the end of primary school. The principle of Freedom of education means that schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Schools develop their own educational policies, including pedagogical plans, teaching methods, curriculum and timetables, and appoint their own staff. At the same time, parents are free to choose a school for their child(ren) which lays the foundation for potentially strong competition among schools. All student assessment and related certification at key stages of schooling is designed and conducted at the school level, but schools may seek external support. For example, all schools belong to an educational network and may use a curriculum and/or tests developed by the different umbrella organisations within these networks. Only schools that are "recognised" by the Flemish authorities are allowed to award official diplomas and certificates. All "recognised" schools and schools receiving public funding must: follow a core curriculum set by the Flemish authorities (attainment targets or developmental objectives according to the stage or type of education); and allow the Flemish authorities to assure their quality (this is done via the Inspectorate).

Concerns of inequities within the school system have lead to efforts to stimulate collaboration among schools, school self-evaluation, plus a demand for information on school quality

The Flemish Community of Belgium can boast high quality schooling in international comparison. Although there is no collection of comparable performance information for all Flemish schools, results from international assessments indicate some worrying inequities among schools: outcomes are strongly influenced by student and school background. To address these concerns, there has been significant political focus on equity of educational opportunities, including local consultation platforms for agreements on student intake policies among schools and additional funding for schools to implement equal opportunity policies. Traditionally, there has been little collaboration among schools outside their educational networks, however the Ministry of Education and Training has introduced "School communities" which offer financial and organisational benefits to member schools. Virtually all Flemish schools now belong to one. A notable

trend is the growing demand for information on school quality. Since 2007, school inspection reports are published and the major focus on school inspections is on school output. There have also been efforts to stimulate school self-evaluation, for example, the results from the National Assessment Programme (NAP) (which monitors outcomes for the Flemish system on a sample of schools) are fed back to participating schools and some specific funding for schools includes evaluation requirements.

Strengths and challenges

Schools have the major responsibility for the school improvement process, but their capacity to make effective school-improvement policies varies

Since September 2009, schools are legally required to implement a system of quality assurance, but the choice of design and type of quality system is up to the schools. Many schools appear to be rising to this challenge. It is a long established tradition that Flemish schools design and implement their own student tests and award student qualifications. Importantly, there is external evaluation of schools' level of responsibility and/or capabilities to assure their quality via inspection. However, schools vary widely in their policy-making capacity, which includes their ability to work with evaluative information and plan strategically for improvement. While schools generally have some form of quality monitoring, its rigour and impact on practice is highly variable. There is no guarantee that process evaluation focuses on the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on student outcomes. While the Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) have started to offer professional development to build schools' policy-making capacities, little is known about the quality of the support offered.

An increasingly information rich environment for school evaluation, but lack of information flow impedes school evaluation efforts

The Ministry of Education and Training has helped to stimulate an information rich environment for school evaluation by: directly developing student assessments and offering tools for schools to use; and supporting Pedagogical Advisory Services for each school network which in turn have developed student assessment and evaluation tools for schools to use. There is also a growing awareness of the need to make better use of centrally held information and to compile more information where necessary. Currently, schools do not benefit from accessing central data and benchmarks for their self-evaluation activities. The Inspectorate does not have information on student performance before it conducts its preliminary investigation, and indeed, may only see information from self-evaluation activities if a school decides to present this to the inspectors. On a similar note, school results from their participation in the national assessment programme are perceived as self-evaluation activities and are not communicated to the Inspectorate.

*There is a degree of common understanding of basic quality
in schools, but insufficient emphasis on improvement and
excellence*

The Flemish government endorses the attainment targets and developmental objectives that together form the core curriculum. All schools are required to meet the Flemish attainment targets, which specify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should demonstrate by the end of primary education and the first, second and third stages of secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Training monitors their implementation via the Inspectorate's evaluation of schools' curricula and their results. Further, the National Assessment Programme provides insight to student mastery of the attainment targets and an annual conference on the results promotes a regular discussion about basic quality in Flemish schools. However, the attainment targets do not provide sufficient stimulus for schools to strive for excellence and continuous improvement. There is no guidance on different performance levels to be achieved beyond the minimum. This results in a high degree of variability in the nature and rigour of school judgements when evaluating their own quality.

*Increased focus on engaging all stakeholders in school
evaluation, but a need to exploit synergies between different
elements of school evaluation*

The Participation Decree in 2004 gives key stakeholders the right to an official voice in school policy making. Although, this may be interpreted differently from school to school, the decree appears to have stimulated the availability of a number of external tools for schools to use to this end, including student and parent surveys. However, there is no policy document or strategic plan providing an overview of different evaluation and assessment elements and how school evaluation is intended to connect to them. In particular, linkages and complementarities are lacking in the following areas: school self-evaluation and school inspection are not aligned and the Inspectorate may not be fully aware of the schools' own evaluation and planning cycle, its priorities and interpretation of recent developments; the extent and rigour of teacher appraisal varies greatly among schools and self-evaluation activities may not systematically evaluate the quality of teaching and learning; school leader appraisal is the responsibility of the school's governing board and is not directly linked to either inspections or school self-evaluation.

*Although the importance of a school's policy-making capacity
is recognised, self-evaluation is often not strategic*

Over recent years, policy-making capacity has become an increasingly important feature of school self-evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium. This refers to a school's ability to make policies to improve their educational quality and attain both internal and external objectives for the school. Through its enshrinement in policy and the inspection system, schools are increasingly paying attention to the specifics of what it means to be strong in policy-making capacity. Support for policy-making capacity development is also available from the Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD). However, international evidence shows that self-evaluation in lower secondary schools is a much less frequent practice in the Flemish Community of Belgium compared to in other countries and that there is an underdeveloped culture for using student assessment data to

monitor school progress. Further, self-evaluation activities appear to be reactive, rather than proactive, and evaluation results do not necessarily feed into the schools' planning processes. This suggests a lack of strategic oversight by school leaders.

The basic teacher competencies connect with self-evaluation, but many teachers find it difficult to understand self-evaluation processes

Teachers are well placed to play an active role in school self-evaluation, given that the basic competencies decreed for teachers include: facilitating learning and development via the assessment of student progress; innovating and researching; being a member of the school; and being an external partner. Flemish teachers are also expected to possess certain attitudes that are related to school self-evaluation, that is, they should: feel responsibility for whole school commitment; engage in fostering positive child development; and be self-critical, curious and co-operative. However, the OECD review team formed the impression that many Flemish educators find it difficult to understand self-evaluation processes and determine effective ways to use data. Although test development is part of teacher education and support is available, teachers and some school leaders struggle with data analysis and pulling together all of the student level data collected into a coherent whole. Difficulties with data interpretation can lead to unrealistic conclusions from self-evaluation.

Emerging collegial relations within and between schools to support evaluation capacity development

International evidence indicates a relatively high level of collaboration among teachers within Flemish secondary schools. During the OECD review, teachers in several schools spoke of the strength of their collaboration and indeed this is one of the basic teacher competencies. However, with the long established principle of freedom of education and strong school autonomy, there is generally little collaboration among Flemish schools. There are recent examples of efforts to promote professional learning networks among schools, for example via umbrella organisations or school communities. Although these emerging collegial relationships are at relatively early stages of development, their emergence is a strength in that they are focusing on helping schools develop both their own school evaluation capacity and the potential for critical friendship.

The CIPO inspection framework is empirically grounded and comprehensive, but lacks objective criteria to judge "quality"

The components of the CIPO (Context, Input, Process, Output) inspection framework are empirically grounded and are also used in the methodologies of other inspectorates. Further, the CIPO inspection framework is comprehensive, for example checking key processes: school leadership and development of school vision, school staff quality and management of staff; logistics and well-being; and educational policy, including curriculum, coaching, counselling and evaluation. The examination of a school's output focuses on learning results, school career, outcome and satisfaction and forms the basis for the inspector's judgement on the school. Although there is a general concept of what constitutes a good school, which also has an empirical foundation, there are no clear reference standards or demarcation points above which a school is sufficient, good, or

excellent. In the absence of clear standards for output and the other components of the CIPO inspection framework, inspectors face a challenge to apply objective criteria in forming their judgements. Without an objective, external norm for quality, there is a risk that schools adjust the norm to suit their own interest, thus putting students at risk.

The Inspectorate has made efforts to improve the coherence of inspections, but it remains a priority to make inspectors' judgements more uniform

Recently, the Inspectorate has taken a variety of measures to assure inter-rater reliability of inspection judgements and reports. This is a positive step as comparative research of inspection approaches reveals that this is often lacking in inspectorates. Major efforts include the reorganisation of inspection teams, the introduction of a Quality Indicator Model to aid the judgement on how school processes lead to output and internal reading groups to help create convergence in inspectors' quality judgements. The Inspectorate also regularly controls its own quality via feedback from schools on the inspection process and has recently created a quality co-ordinator post within the Inspectorate. Such efforts are critical in the absence of objective criteria for judging the quality of a school. The decision about the quality of a school is a rather holistic process, where strengths and weaknesses are weighed with respect to their influence on the output of a school. Although the inspectors deserve respect for their consequent deliberations about the quality of a school as a whole, it is a challenge to make their judgements more uniform.

Collection of evidence during inspection can stimulate school self-evaluation activities, but the inspection framework remains distant to schools

During school inspections, inspectors gather information by means of classroom observations, perform interviews with school management, individual and groups of teachers, and interviews with students. However, another source of information is the results from any self-evaluation activities at the schools. This can be information of any type: peer reviews, planning and reporting, discussion groups, classroom observation, questionnaires, teacher appraisal, checklists or interviews. The Inspectorate can stimulate schools to use self-evaluation instruments and to present more information to inspectors during their investigations. However, there remain challenges to keep the CIPO inspection framework relevant for schools. It is likely that schools will only pay attention to this when they are due for inspection. Given the comprehensive nature of the framework, schools are advised to only focus on certain aspects over a certain period of time, which risks a loss of internal consistency of the framework.

Policy recommendations

Promote the use of evaluation and assessment for improvement and strengthen related professional development

To promote the use of evaluation and assessment for improvement, the OECD review team proposes that the Ministry of Education and Training conducts a review of all current tools available to schools for their self-evaluation and a mapping of the different purposes, advantages and limitations of each tool. This stock-taking exercise should focus on their potential to measure student progress and the added value that the school brings given the students' background characteristics and prior learning. In parallel, the Ministry of Education and Training should disseminate evidence about schools effectively using different self-evaluation tools to improve school outcomes. The Pedagogical Advisory Services should be encouraged to collect examples (following central guidelines) of good evaluation practice from their work with schools. Further, the Inspectorate could conduct a thematic inspection on issues such as constructive use of data, effective classroom observation and development of school improvement plans. It is important to continue investing in school leader and teacher capacity to design and follow up on effective whole school evaluation approaches, *e.g.* by systematically developing improvement plans based on their own monitoring information. Accordingly, an evaluation of the quality of services provided by the Pedagogical Advisory Services, particularly their processes to evaluate the quality of services they offer to develop school policy-making capacity, is strongly recommended, as such support is instrumental for schools to improving their outcomes.

Strengthen information flow for use in school evaluation

There is room to increase the use of information (collected at either the school level or by the Flemish authorities) for both internal and external school evaluation. The OECD review team strongly supports the proposal to give schools access to information in the Data Warehouse. This offers the opportunity to highlight the CIPO inspection framework and feed into school self-evaluation activities, allowing schools to benchmark against schools with similar context and input factors. The OECD review team notes that the shift in balance of the quality control system (*i.e.* with schools bearing primary responsibility and the introduction of differentiated school inspections) gives leverage to demand performance information from schools. Currently, the Inspectorate lacks key information on the output part of the CIPO inspection framework, as it does not have regular performance information for schools on which to base its risk assessment. Accordingly, there seems an urgent need to establish a protocol whereby schools provide on an annual basis selected data on student performance from their chosen monitoring systems. Further, the OECD review team notes the critical role that objective performance data plays in monitoring equity within an education system and encourages the authorities to seek ways to collect more information to support school evaluation.

Further clarify common goals and expectations to promote excellence and improvement

For school evaluation to be effective in improving quality across the whole education system, it is crucial that all schools have a clear understanding of the level of performance that can be achieved by the most successful schools, and are able to accurately evaluate how their performance stands in comparison. To this end, the Ministry of Education and Training, together with key stakeholder groups, could evaluate the potential for developing a clearer set of criteria describing how students typically progress through their learning in each subject area. Assessment based on these learning progressions could be used to identify different levels of proficiency and to measure growth in student performance, that is, emphasising student improvement and not just whether or not they have achieved minimum standards. In turn, the development of assessment criteria and exemplars illustrating student performance at different levels of proficiency would help schools in their everyday assessment and evaluation work. These tools can be used to define what constitutes, for example, adequate, good and excellent work and can enable teachers to clarify clear assessment criteria and quality definitions. These voluntary resources for teachers could help raise aspirations and communicate a focus on excellence and continuous improvement.

Strengthen consistency and coherence of different elements of school evaluation

The Flemish approach of conducting inspections, while requiring schools to assure their own quality and improvement, can avoid an overreliance on internal or external evaluation. However, there is a need to better integrate self-evaluation and inspection. In particular, the goals, indicators and criteria used in both inspection and self-evaluation should be sufficiently similar, so that there is a common understanding about priorities and the key factors which influence high quality teaching and learning. If evaluation priorities are not clear, there is a risk that schools develop self-evaluation activities only to satisfy demands for external accountability during inspection. For example, arguably, the most important area for inspection and self-evaluation is the quality of teaching and learning. Given that school evaluation and teacher appraisal have the objective of assuring quality and improving student performance, there are likely to be great benefits from increasing synergies between them. This indicates that school evaluation should comprise the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, possibly include the external validation of school-based processes for teacher appraisal (holding the school principal accountable as necessary), and school development processes should explore links to the evaluation of teaching practice. In the context of school self-evaluation, it is also important to ensure the centrality of the evaluation of teaching quality and the feedback to individual teachers. Further, inspectors would benefit from systematic access to documentation on school principal appraisals.

Recognise the key role of school leaders in self-evaluation and strengthen their policy-making capacity

The quality of school self-evaluation rests, to a large extent, on the quality of school leaders and their capacity to make effective policies for school improvement. To give greater status to self-evaluation, the Ministry of Education and Training, in collaboration with professional school leader associations, could develop a common set of leadership competencies that include reference to self-evaluation and policy-making competencies as part of the commitment to school improvement. Further, creating a position of "evaluation co-ordinator" at a senior level in each school would signal the importance of self-evaluation activities. Key tasks might include creating an evaluation plan with the school principal, identifying and advising on self-evaluation instruments, overseeing their use, collating and analysing the data, and facilitating their interpretation and use by school staff. There is also room for providers to collaborate in refining leadership training, drawing on research and examples of successful school leaders with strong policy-making capacity and providing opportunities to practise using, analysing and interpreting different kinds of data (qualitative and quantitative). The Ministry of Education and Training could also consider funding a project to identify with stakeholders the specific evaluation and enquiry competencies related to effective pedagogy and school quality that school leaders need to develop, and designing and supporting related competency development.

Ensure school self-evaluation focuses on the quality of teaching and promotes professional development

It is critical to strengthen the links between school self-evaluation and teaching quality. The focus of teacher appraisal should be widened, by adapting job descriptions to include appropriate aspects of school self-evaluation, *e.g.* the teacher competencies related to being a member of the school team and innovators and researchers, among others. Classroom observation should play a prominent role in teacher appraisal and feedback. There is also room for teachers to more systematically seek feedback from students on their teaching. In addition, the results of teacher appraisal should be connected both to self-evaluation and the school's professional development plan. This would bring a greater sense of coherence to the process and increase the connection for teachers. Teachers need further support both in their initial education and their ongoing professional development to develop their competencies as researchers and innovators, as well as becoming proficient users of data. Through access to research on effective pedagogy as well as effective schooling, teachers can gain deeper understanding of what a good school is and what it means to be part of a professional learning community – a school where collaborative enquiry and use of data for whole-school improvement is the norm. Greater co-operation between the different networks' Pedagogical Advisory Services, drawing on each other's experience and expertise, would help provide a more coherent and consistent offer. Further, a centralised funding grant to promote collaborative teacher research projects, supported by universities, would also signal the value of ongoing enquiry.

Extend collegial practice both within and among schools

The OECD review team sees strong potential in extending collegial practice both within and among schools. In schools, there is scope for greater collaboration between teacher teams. Teacher group work could be stimulated and encouraged through collaborative action research projects, where teachers identify an issue through data and track it through, and greater opportunities for peer observation. This does not need to be mandated, but incentivised. Leadership standards in a number of countries also now highlight the importance of networking and partnerships between schools. There are emerging examples of networks or communities developing projects and other initiatives focused on collegial visits or peer reviews among schools. Such activity would benefit from further development and co-ordination by school boards, Pedagogical Advisory Services, city education departments and universities working together in order to understand and define examples of good practice in peer review among schools. Critical friendship does not just happen by chance. It needs development, including the development of observation and evaluation skills, and skills of professional dialogue, including listening and feedback, among others. It also requires the development of trust. Schools exist that are stronger in their policy-making capacities and ways could be found to involve their staff in supporting and training colleagues in other schools.

Clarify the criteria for inspection judgements on the quality of education

The OECD review team suggests that clear criteria are defined for the components of each of the three pillars of quality education: respecting the rules and regulations; quality assurance; and capacity to establish good policy. This will allow the Inspectorate to present schools with a clear-cut judgement about their strengths and weaknesses, promote school uptake of quality assurance and promote school policy-making capacity development. The Inspectorate should draw up operational descriptions for the quality criteria and use scores or labels (*e.g.* excellent, good, fair, weak) to evaluate the criteria. Such clarifications will make it easier to be transparent about the weight given to each of the inspection criteria in forming a judgement on school quality. This will be of considerable use in further clarifying that school self-evaluation capacity is a core component of its educational quality. Schools that develop high quality self-evaluation practices will have greater capacity to sustain high performance and respond to current and emerging issues. Also, they will be better placed to identify weaknesses in their delivery and work towards continuous improvement.

Go further in improving the inter-rater reliability of inspection reports

Ensuring a common approach to inspection via training (during both induction and later stages of an inspector's career) is the standard way for inspectorates to enhance inter-rater reliability. In addition, inter-rater reliability can be improved by increasing the number of schools that have to be studied during an inspection (*e.g.* by grouping together schools that belong to a common governing board). Another measure is to increase the number of inspectors making the judgement, for example, conducting regular dual observations and judgements of teaching episodes, analysing the results and connecting

these with specific training for inspectors. Both elements are present in the reports for pedagogical groups of schools that the Inspectorate has recently started to produce. Other inspectoral strategies to improve inter-rater reliability of the inspection reports include: continuous rotation of groups of inspectors and individuals, sessions about case discussions and case analysis, video training about interpretations of observations. The development of clear criteria, would also allow the analysis of trends and typical patterns in the inspection scores given by different inspectors. Obviously, regular meetings for the whole group of inspectors would also help to increase convergence of inspectors' judgements.

Ensure regular and meaningful feedback to schools on key CIPO inspection framework indicators

The OECD review team suggests that the Inspectorate uses all possible means for communicating about its standards for educational quality, thus contributing to (but not determining!) a quality culture in education. As a way to improve the understanding and use of the CIPO inspection framework by schools during an inspection, but also in the years between inspections, there should be regular feedback to schools of information from the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse mapped to the CIPO inspection framework. Further, the Inspectorate could work with schools to build a shared language of quality and evaluation. The CIPO inspection framework remains abstract to many schools and as a result, the processes of self-evaluation and external evaluation are unlikely to be well aligned and mutually reinforcing. While the CIPO inspection framework is comprehensive and covers key dimensions of effective school practice, the language used is quite technical and remote from the day-to-day language teachers would normally use when speaking about the learning and achievement of their students. There is a need for the Inspectorate to collaborate more closely with schools around the use of the model as well as the indicators and criteria of quality that are used.

Devise ways to improve the public use of inspection results

One way to stimulate the public use of inspection results is to simplify the language of school evaluation and to make this more digestible for a broader public. In addition to the short summary aimed at parents included in the front of each inspection report, small quality charts can be provided that give a visual (instead of purely verbal) representation of the school's quality. Also, a specific website for a broader public could include information from the Inspectorate, but presenting clear information on schools without making reference to inspection criteria or norms. The Inspectorate could extend its model of school-community based reports. This is one way to align the growing need for comparison by grouping school inspection reports more together, so that a richer set of information is available to schools and interested parents. Going further, the Inspectorate could consider strategies to build on this to also show reports for groupings of good and excellent schools: to show which policies these schools implement and their school improvement processes.