



OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education

School Evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium

Claire Shewbridge, Marian Hulshof,
Deborah Nusche and Louise Stoll



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Foreword

This report for the Flemish Community of Belgium forms part of the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes (see Annex A for further details). The purpose of the Review is to explore how systems of evaluation and assessment can be used to improve the quality, equity and efficiency of school education. The Review looks at the various components of assessment and evaluation frameworks that countries use with the objective of improving student outcomes. These include student assessment, teacher appraisal, school evaluation and system evaluation.

The Flemish Community of Belgium was one of the education systems which opted to participate in the country review strand and host a visit by an external review team. Members of the review team were Claire Shewbridge (OECD Secretariat), co-ordinator of the Review; Marian Hulshof (Research and Development, the Dutch Inspectorate); Deborah Nusche (OECD Secretariat); and Louise Stoll (London Centre for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education, University of London). This publication is the report from the review team. It provides, from an international perspective, an independent analysis of major issues facing the evaluation and assessment framework in the Flemish Community of Belgium, current policy initiatives, and possible future approaches. The report serves three purposes: (1) Provide insights and advice to the Flemish education authorities; (2) Help other OECD countries understand the Flemish approach; and (3) Provide input for the final comparative report of the project.

The involvement of the Flemish Community of Belgium in the OECD Review was co-ordinated by Ms. Miekatrien Sterck, Policy Adviser, Department of Strategic Policy Support, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training. An important part of the involvement of the Flemish Community of Belgium was the preparation of a comprehensive and informative Country Background Report (CBR) on evaluation and assessment policy, published by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp Edubron Research Group in 2010. The review team is very grateful to the authors of the CBR, and to all those who assisted them for providing an informative document. The CBR is an important output from the OECD activity in its own right as well as an important source for the review team. Unless indicated otherwise, the data for this report are taken from the Flemish Country Background Report. The CBR follows guidelines prepared by the OECD Secretariat and provides extensive information, analysis and discussion in regard to the national context, the organisation of the education system, the main features of the evaluation and assessment framework and the views of key stakeholders. In this sense, the CBR and this report complement each other and, for a more comprehensive view of evaluation and assessment in the Flemish Community of Belgium, should be read in conjunction.

The review visit to the Flemish Community of Belgium took place on 25 January to 1 February 2011 and covered visits to Brussels, Antwerp, Vilvoorde and Sint-Niklaas. The itinerary is provided in Annex B. The visit was designed by the OECD in

collaboration with the Flemish authorities. The biographies of the members of the review team are provided in Annex C.

During the review visit, the team held discussions with a wide range of national, regional and local authorities; officials from the Ministry of Education and Training; relevant agencies outside the Ministry which deal with evaluation and assessment issues; teacher unions; parents' organisations; representatives of schools; students' organisations; and researchers with an interest in evaluation and assessment issues. The team also visited a range of schools, interacting with school management, teachers and students. The intention was to provide a broad cross-section of information and opinions on evaluation and assessment policies and how their effectiveness can be improved.

The review team wishes to record its grateful appreciation to the many people who gave time from their busy schedules to inform the review team of their views, experiences and knowledge. The meetings were open and provided a wealth of insights. Special words of appreciation are due to the National Co-ordinator, Ms. Miekatrien Sterck, her colleagues from the Flemish Department of Strategic Policy Support and the steering group for the review, for sharing their expertise and responding to the many questions of the review team¹. The courtesy and hospitality extended to us throughout our stay in the Flemish Community of Belgium made our task as a review team as pleasant and enjoyable as it was stimulating and challenging.

The review team is also grateful to colleagues at the OECD, especially to Stefanie Dufaux for her contribution to the statistical annex to this report (Annex E) and to Heike-Daniela Herzog for editorial support.

This report is organised in four chapters. Chapter 1 provides the context for school evaluation, with information on the Flemish school system. Chapter 2 examines the governance of school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium and considers how school evaluation can relate to other key components of evaluation and assessment in the Flemish Community of Belgium in a more coherent way to effectively improve student learning. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth analysis of school self-evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium, including the procedures used, how self-evaluation results are used and the capacity of key stakeholders to undertake this. Chapter 4 follows the same analytical approach for school inspection and both chapters present strengths, challenges and policy recommendations in these areas. The report closes with an overview on conclusions and recommendations.

The policy recommendations attempt to build on and strengthen reforms that are already underway in the Flemish Community of Belgium, and the strong commitment to further improvement that was evident among those we met. The suggestions should take into account the difficulties that face any visiting group, no matter how well briefed, in grasping the complexity of the Flemish education system and fully understanding all the issues.

Of course, this report is the responsibility of the review team. While we benefited greatly from the Flemish CBR and other documents, as well as the many discussions with a wide range of Flemish personnel, any errors or misinterpretations in this report are our responsibility.

Notes

1. In particular the members of the steering group: Véronique Adriaens, Department for Education and Training (unit responsible for Primary Education and part-time Art Education); Mieke Beeckmans, Department for Education and Training (unit responsible for Labour Conditions of Teachers); Rita Dunon, Department for Education and Training (Strategic Policy Unit); Sarah Gielen, Catholic University of Leuven-Kortrijk; Ruben Plees, Department for Education and Training (unit responsible for Secondary and Adult Education); Miekatrien Sterck, Department for Education and Training (Strategic Policy Unit); Ann Van Driessche, Department for Education and Training (Staff Services); René Vanotterdijk, Inspectorate; Els Ver Eecke, Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AGODI	Agency for Educational Services (<i>Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten</i>)
AKOV	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training
ASO	General secondary education (<i>Algemeen secundair onderwijs</i>)
BSO	Vocational secondary education (<i>Beroepssecundair onderwijs</i>)
BUSO	Special secondary education (<i>Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs</i>)
CBR	Country Background Report (the report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp Edubron Research Group as a background document for this review)
CIPO	Context-Input-Process-Output – the framework used by the Flemish Inspectorate
CITO	Central Institute for Test Development (Dutch testing and assessment company)
CLB	Centre for Pupil Guidance (<i>Centrum voor Leerlingbegeleiding</i>)
ECEGO	Centre for Experience based Education (<i>Experisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs</i>)
ESCS	PISA index of socio-economic and cultural status
GO!	The Flemish Community Education Network (<i>Het GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap</i>)
GOK	Flemish policy on equal educational opportunities (<i>Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid</i>)
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IDP	6 th grade test offered by the VSKO (<i>Inter-Diocesan Proeven</i>)
IPCO	Council of Governing Bodies of Protestant-Christian Education
KSO	Secondary arts education (<i>Kunst secundair onderwijs</i>)
LOSO	Longitudinal research in secondary education (<i>Longitudinaal Onderzoek Secundair Onderwijs</i>)
LVS	Flemish pupil monitoring system (<i>Leerlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen</i>)
NAP	National Assessment Programme (<i>Peilingen</i>)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGO	Publicly funded, publicly managed education network
OKO	Consultation Body of Small Education Providers (<i>Overleg Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers</i>)
OVSG	Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (<i>Onderwijssecretariaat voor Steden en Gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap</i>)
PBD	Pedagogical Advisory Service (<i>Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst</i>)
PISA	OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment
POV	Provincial authorities: school boards are represented by the Flemish Provincial Education (<i>Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen</i>)
SALTO	Test to monitor children's Dutch language ability at the start of primary education
SAM	Scale for Attitude Measurement (<i>Schaal voor AttitudeMeting</i>)
SiBO	School Careers in Primary Education longitudinal research project (<i>Schoolloopbanen in het Basisonderwijs – onderzoek</i>)
SICI	Standing International Conference of Inspectorates of Education
TALIS	OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey
TSO	Technical secondary education (<i>Technisch secundair onderwijs</i>)
VDAB	Public Employment Service of Flanders
VGO	Publicly funded, privately managed education network
VSK	Flemish Student Council (<i>Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel</i>)
VSKO	Flemish Catholic Education Secretariat (<i>Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs</i>)

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.

Chapter 1

Schooling in the Flemish Community of Belgium

The chapter presents the main features of the Flemish school system, including its structure, school funding and rights to award official qualifications and the major educational networks available to schools. It also examines evidence on the quality and equity of Flemish schools and considers major trends and policy developments that influence school evaluation.

This chapter provides an overview of key features of schooling in the Flemish Community of Belgium for readers who are not familiar with the system, with an aim to better contextualise school evaluation approaches.

Main features of the school system

Compulsory education offered in primary and secondary schools

There is compulsory and free education for all children from age 6 to 18 in Belgium¹. Although the vast majority of children pursue this in schools, some parents may choose home education for their children. The Flemish school system is stratified and schooling is organised in four main stages, with the first streaming of children into different types of education at the end of primary school:

- Primary education: children follow six years of primary education from age 6 to 12. There is also an offer of seven years of special primary education. At the end of primary education, children who achieve the objectives of the curriculum receive a certificate (curriculum objectives are based on the Flemish attainment targets).
- Secondary education (first stage): students follow two years of education from age 12 to 14. This is either in the “A stream” in which students must achieve the Flemish attainment targets, or in the “B stream” in which students pursue the Flemish developmental objectives. All children who have received a certificate for primary education are enrolled in the “A stream” (this was 84% of all children in 2010). Those who wish to pursue a vocational education or who have not achieved the primary education certificate enrol in the “B stream”. Upon completion of their first year in “B stream”, some students may be eligible to transfer to the first year of the “A stream”, if they wish to do so.
- Secondary education (second stage): from age 14 to 16, students attend one of four distinct types of secondary education:
 - General secondary education (ASO, *Algemeen secundair onderwijs*): a broad general education that provides a good basis for progression to tertiary education. In 2009/10, 40% of students entered ASO.
 - Technical secondary education (TSO, *Technisch secundair onderwijs*): an offer of general and technical/theoretical subjects, preparing students for a technical profession or tertiary education. This includes practical classes. In 2009/10, 32% of students entered TSO.
 - Secondary arts education (KSO, *Kunst secundair onderwijs*): a broad general education with active arts practice, preparing students for an artistic profession or tertiary education. In 2009/10, 2% of students entered KSO.
 - Vocational secondary education (BSO, *Beroepssecundair onderwijs*): a practice-oriented education with general education included, preparing students for a specific occupation. While most students enter the labour market upon completion of BSO, they are allowed to enrol in tertiary education. In 2009/10, 26% of students entered BSO.

All types include common, compulsory subjects and optional subjects. Flemish attainment targets are specified for the general education components in TSO, KSO and BSO, and for the vast majority of subjects in ASO.

- Secondary education (third stage): from the age of 16 to 18, students continue in one of the four distinct types of secondary education (although some may wish to change types and may be eligible to do so), but with a more focused training depending on their planned further education or career pathway. Students may also choose to pursue part-time education. After the successful completion of six years of ASO, TSO or KSO or seven years of BSO, students receive a diploma of secondary education. With the exception of specific degrees in dentistry or medicine, all students holding a diploma can enter the tertiary education of their choice.

It is of note that students have the option to follow part-time education from the age of 15 or 16. Students can either: study part-time vocational secondary education; undertake an apprenticeship; or follow part-time training programmes.

For students with special educational needs, there is also an offer of special secondary education (BUSO, *Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs*). This is tailored to the specific needs of the student and students only move to the next stage of secondary education when and if they are ready to do so.

All student assessment and related certification at key stages of the schooling system is designed and conducted at the school level. Although, schools may seek support and may conduct some externally designed tests (see Chapter 3).

The conditions for schools to award official qualifications and to receive public funding

The concept of “recognition” is of key importance in the Flemish Community. Schools that are “recognised” by the Flemish authorities have the right to award official diplomas and certificates recognised by the Flemish authorities. All “recognised” schools must be inspected.

There are additional requirements for schools to receive public funding. Indeed, not all “recognised” schools receive public funds, *e.g.* military schools. Since the 2007 Decree on Financing of Education in the Flemish Community, all schools receiving public funding are subject to the same funding formula and this is tied to the characteristics of students attending the school. However, schools receiving public funding are required to operate within a regulatory framework. There are two major requirements related to school evaluation: they must follow a core curriculum set by the Flemish authorities (attainment targets or developmental objectives depending on the stage or type of education); and they must allow the Flemish authorities to assure their quality (this is done via the Inspectorate).

There are a small number of schools that do not receive public funding (privately funded and privately managed schools) in the Flemish Community and these do not have to follow the core curriculum or participate in inspections. These schools are not allowed to award official certificates or diplomas and students attending such schools need to go to the Examination Commission in order to receive official qualifications.

School governance and representation in policy discussions

Schools enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the Flemish Community. As part of the Belgian Constitution, “Freedom of education” gives the right to any natural or legal person to start a school. This “freedom of organisation” allows each school to develop its own educational policies, including its own pedagogical plan, teaching methods, curriculum and timetables, as well as to appoint its own staff. Although, schools receiving public funding are required to operate within a regulatory framework, they still enjoy “considerable autonomy” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).

At the same time, “Freedom of education” gives the right to all parents to choose a school for their child(ren). This means that schools are accountable to parents and lays the foundation for potentially strong competition among schools.

There are 1 500 governing bodies or school boards (*inrichtende machten*) providing recognised education in the Flemish Community. They can be responsible for one or more schools. These school boards are distributed over three “educational networks” and may belong to an “umbrella organisation”, that is, a representative association of school boards that acts as a partner for schools in policy discussions with the government (Vlaamse overheid, 2008):

- The Flemish Community Education network (GO!, *Het GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap*) includes 16% of students in primary and secondary education. It acts under the authority of the Flemish Community and has its own governing body (the Community Educational Council). Schools are organised in groups and these school groups decide the operational education policies for their member schools.
- The Publicly funded, publicly managed education network (OGO), includes 22% of students in primary education and 8% in secondary education. The network includes education organised by:
 - local authorities, that is cities or municipal authorities: school boards are represented by the Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG, *Onderwijssecretariaat voor Steden en Gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap*);
 - provincial authorities: school boards are represented by the Flemish Provincial Education (POV, *Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen*).
- The Publicly funded, privately managed education network (VGO), includes 60% of students in primary education and 75% in secondary education. It includes school boards offering education of
 - Catholic denomination: governing boards can be dioceses, orders, congregations or other organisations and are represented by the Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO, *Vlaams Secretariaat Katholiek Onderwijs*). These governing boards are the vast majority within the VGO network;
 - Other denomination: with the exception of the Council of Governing Bodies of Protestant-Christian Education (IPCO), these school boards are not represented by an umbrella organisation;

- No denomination, but with a particular educational method (*e.g.* Freinet, Montessori, Steiner): school boards (together with the IPCO) are represented by the Consultation Body of Small Education Providers (OKO, *Overleg Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers*).

School boards may surrender some of their autonomy to their umbrella organisations, for example, by following a curriculum developed by the umbrella organisation. Each umbrella organisation has its own Pedagogical Advisory Service (PBD, *Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst*). These offer educational and methodological support to schools (see Chapter 2).

Quality and equity in Flemish schools

In international comparison, the Flemish Community of Belgium can boast high quality schooling. Since the 1970s, Belgium has a highly skilled population in international comparison and the proportion of its population holding tertiary qualifications has risen both in absolute terms and compared to other OECD countries: 42% of Belgian 25 to 34-year-olds held a tertiary qualification in 2008, compared to 37% on average in the OECD (see Annex E). Over the past generation, the general level of education in Belgium has gradually increased in comparison to other OECD countries, with the proportion of 25 to 34-year-olds having attained upper secondary education or higher (83%) now slightly above the OECD average². Indeed, 15 year-old students in the Flemish Community of Belgium have consistently performed above average in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys since 2000. Flemish students rank among the top three performers internationally in the mathematics assessment and among the top ten in the science and reading assessments (see Annex E).

Further, compared to other OECD countries, the Flemish Community is more equitable in terms of limiting the proportion of low-skilled students: results on reading performance in the 2009 survey showed both a greater than average proportion of top performers and a lower than average proportion of low performers.³ However, the PISA 2009 results also confirmed that there are some worrying inequities within the Flemish Community:

- Socio-economic factors strongly influence student performance: Differences in student socio-economic background explained a slightly higher proportion of the variance in student reading performance than on average in the OECD and the most advantaged quarter of Flemish students outscored the least advantaged quarter by 100 score points, indicating a significant educational gap.⁴
- Performance differences among schools are related in part to socio-economic differences: As would be expected with the different types of secondary schooling offered to Flemish students, a higher proportion of reading performance is observed between schools than on average in the OECD. However, socio-economic differences among students and schools account for nearly twice as much of the observed between-school performance differences in the Flemish Community, compared to on average in the OECD. In particular, students with an immigrant background were in schools with a significantly less advantaged average socio-economic composition.⁵
- Major performance disadvantage on average for students with an immigrant background: In terms of average reading performance, while native students

perform way above the OECD average (both overall and compared to native students in other countries), students with an immigrant background perform way below the OECD average and on a par to students with an immigrant background in other countries. The proportion of low performing students with an immigrant background is nearly three times larger than the proportion of low performing native students. This significant educational gap cannot be fully explained by student socio-economic background or the language they speak at home. Indeed, it remains more pronounced than on average in the OECD even after accounting for these factors.⁶

Recent trends and policy developments

Partly in response to international evidence on some entrenched inequities in the Flemish school system, there have been major drives to: increase the equity of educational opportunities and to increase collaboration within and among schools; and focus more on school quality and to make schools legally responsible for this.

Political focus on equity of educational opportunities

There is strong political focus on the need to increase the equity of educational opportunities. Policy on Equal Educational Opportunities (GOK, *Gelijke Onderwijskansen*) has played a prominent role since the adoption of the 2002 Decree of Equity of Educational Opportunities. The 2002 Decree provides for: the right for each child to enrol in the school of choice, with very strict rules on refusal or referral of students; the creation of local consultation platforms to ensure co-operation in implementing local equal educational opportunities policies; and extra support for schools providing additional educational support as part of this policy. In addition to an evaluation of how schools use the extra support they receive, schools need to self-evaluate in selected areas (see Chapter 3).

Further, there is political focus on language policy in schools and this topic was given a specific focus in school inspections conducted in the 2009/10 academic year.

Efforts to increase collaboration and participation within and among schools

As already mentioned, the GOK policy requires the establishment of local consultation platforms. This is one recent example of a push to stimulate more collaboration among schools. Most schools belong to an umbrella organisation (see above), but there is traditionally little collaboration among schools outside their educational networks. A major effort to stimulate collaboration among schools has been the Ministry of Education and Training's promotion of "school communities" (*scholengemeenschappen*). These consist of a group of schools in a similar geographical area. This means that schools from different educational networks could belong to a school community. Schools join a school community on a voluntary basis. However, the Ministry of Education and Training provides incentives for schools to join a school community by offering extra resources (*i.e.* extra teaching time for primary and secondary schools). In the case of secondary schools, there are also some organisational advantages to joining a school community. These efforts have successfully stimulated further collaboration among schools and virtually all schools offering mainstream primary and secondary education belong to a school community

(see Table 1.1). The Ministry of Education and Training defined clear criteria and responsibilities for school communities. Belonging to a school community “implies continuous evaluation and adjustment of school policies” and therefore effectively promotes school improvement (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).

Table 1.1 Promoting collaboration among schools

	Schools belonging to a school community		Schools not associated with a school community	
Primary mainstream education	2290	98.7%	30	1.3%
Primary special education	175	88.8%	22	11.1%
Secondary mainstream education	950	98.0%	19	2.0%
Secondary special education	64	57.7%	47	42.3%
Total schools	3479	96.7%	118	3.3%

Note: Data for primary schools are from 2009; data for secondary schools are from 2010.

Each school is advised on school policies by its School Council, comprising members of the school and the local community, and since 2004 it is legally stipulated that all schools should promote participation of key stakeholders (see Chapter 2).

Growing demands for information on school quality

Over the last decade, there has been increased importance given to indicators and output measures in evaluating educational quality (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). Among other factors, this is attributed to a general shift to focusing on output measurements in Europe and internationally, as well as the availability of attainment targets and developmental objectives and their periodic assessment as part of the National Assessment Programme (see Chapter 2). Further, it is argued that a focus on outputs is more cost-effective than the assessment of processes. Indeed, since 2009 the external evaluation of schools conducted by the Flemish Inspectorate has taken a “differentiated” approach to focus inspection efforts on both the schools most in need of this and priority areas within individual schools (see Chapter 4). At the same time, the Decree on Transparency in Governance in 2004 allowed for the publication of individual school inspection reports. From 2007 on, these have been published on the Inspectorate’s website.

Importantly, in this context there is consensus among the Ministry of Education and Training and all stakeholders to avoid the “ranking or comparisons (of schools) based on numerical data” as it is perceived such comparisons would increase competition among schools and not improve quality (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). Indeed, there is no collection of comparable performance information on all schools in the Flemish Community (see Chapter 2).

Making schools responsible for their quality and clarifying procedures for school evaluation

The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) states that each school is responsible for providing good quality education. This means that school “efforts to account for and improve their quality is the central theme in school evaluation” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). This heightens school autonomy as

the responsibility for school quality no longer lies external to the school. The other key actors in school evaluation are the Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) that are appointed to provide external support to schools, and the Inspectorate and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV). The Inspectorate is tasked with conducting external quality control of schools and must provide advice to the Flemish authorities on the inclusion of schools in the recognition, *i.e.* for their further funding (see above). The decree stipulates the exact meaning of the three possible recommendations that the Inspectorate can make in this respect (see Chapter 4).

The clarification that schools are responsible for systematically monitoring their quality is the logical progression in a series of initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Training to stimulate schools to conduct self-evaluations (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4). One of the major policy projects is “Strengthening internal quality care of schools”. Notably, this has led to the development of parallel versions of the National Assessment Programme (NAP): although the NAP is a periodical sample survey to monitor the implementation of the Flemish attainment targets at the system level, schools are now able to administer parallel versions of these tests as part of their own evaluation activities. All schools participating in the NAP – and now also schools participating in international student assessments – receive feedback reports for their own evaluation and improvement purposes. Further, a key mechanism has been to make special funding available via school participation in innovation projects or as part of the GOK policy (see above) subject to requirements for schools to evaluate in related areas.

Notes

1. In the Flemish Community, for primary education, parents do not have to pay for any school materials or activities that are necessary to achieve the Flemish attainment targets. Any expenses in secondary education must be “effective, demonstrable and justified” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).
2. The OECD average is 81%. The proportion of 45 to 54-year-olds having attained at least upper secondary education (67%) is slightly below the OECD average (71%) (see Annex E).
3. The mean performance for Flemish students in reading was 519 score points (OECD average = 493), the proportion of top performers (proficiency Levels 5 or 6) was 12.6% (OECD = 7.6%) and the proportion of low performers (proficiency Level 2 or below) was 13.0% (OECD average = 18.8% (OECD, 2010).
4. 16.5% of variance in Flemish student reading performance is explained by the PISA index of socio-economic and cultural status (ESCS) (OECD average = 14.0%). Flemish students in the top quarter of the index of ESCS had a mean reading performance of 572 score points (OECD average = 540 score points) and those in the bottom quarter, 472 score points (OECD average = 451 score points) (OECD, 2010).
5. Overall, reading performance variance in the Flemish Community is about the same as on average in the OECD (101.6, versus 100.6 in the OECD). However, 63.5% of reading performance variance lies between schools in the Flemish Community, in contrast to 41.7% in the OECD. The PISA index of socio-economic and cultural status (ESCS) explains 43.9% of the between-school reading performance variance in the Flemish Community, but only 23.8% on average in the OECD. The average index of ESCS value for schools attended by native students in the Flemish community is 0.05 (OECD average = 0.04) and for schools attended by students with an immigrant background it is -0.62 (OECD average = -0.26). Therefore, the average difference in school ESCS was twice as pronounced in the Flemish Community, than in the OECD on average (-0.67 index points, versus -0.31 index points on average in the OECD). All data taken from OECD, 2010.
6. In the Flemish Community, native students have a mean reading performance of 526 score points (OECD average for native students = 499 score points) and 11.2% perform below Level 2 on the reading proficiency scale. Students with an immigrant background have a mean reading performance of 457 score points (the same as for students with an immigrant background on average in the OECD) and 30.3% perform below Level 2 on the reading proficiency scale. The average reading performance disadvantage for students with an immigrant background is -70 score points, and this remains -40 score points after accounting for the PISA index of socio-economic and cultural status (ESCS) and the language spoken at home. This compares to a disadvantage of -43 score points on average in the OECD, reduced to -27 score points with the equivalent adjustment. All data taken from OECD, 2010.

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Chapter 2

Governing school evaluation

This chapter gives an overview of the major features of school evaluation governance in the Flemish Community of Belgium, including: the division of responsibilities for school evaluation; major information sources used for school evaluation; the design, role and extent of interaction between internal and external school evaluation; and structures to promote consultation and collaboration within and among schools. It then analyses the strengths and challenges to the current governance approach and recommends some areas for further policy development.

This chapter addresses the design and governance of school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium, including the distribution of responsibilities among different stakeholders, the interaction between internal and external school evaluation activities and the improvement and accountability functions of school evaluation.

Context and features

In essence, school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium rests on the three major pillars for quality assurance in the schooling system: centrally-set minimum learning objectives for students (attainment targets and developmental objectives); external controlling of schools' implementation of these learning objectives and their quality assurance, as well as compliance with other legal responsibilities; and offer of support to schools in developing and assuring their quality.

Responsibilities for school evaluation

Responsibilities for school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium are conceived as a “triangle of quality” which sets distinct responsibilities for schools, the Flemish Inspectorate and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV), and Pedagogical Advisory Services (*Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst*, PBD) attached to the different “umbrella organisations”. Umbrella organisations are representative associations of school governing boards (see below).

Schools

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, schools carry the major responsibility for the quality of education they deliver. Their central role was formalised in 2009 (Decree on Quality of Education) as one of three partners in the “triangle of quality”. Prior to this, the triangle was conceived as comprising three external institutions to ensure schools deliver good quality outcomes (the Inspectorate, the Pedagogical Advisory Services and the Department for Educational Development). The 2009 Decree explicitly states that each school is responsible for providing good quality education and supporting educational processes in an optimal manner. While each school defines “quality education”, all schools are obliged to produce results against the centrally-set attainment targets and to account for their efforts to pursue the centrally-set developmental objectives (see below). Therefore, schools must ensure that the curriculum they use addresses at a minimum the attainment targets and developmental objectives. In reality, schools' curricula are broader and are often set by their umbrella organisations.

Although school self-evaluation is not mandatory in the Flemish Community of Belgium, all schools “need to be able to account for their efforts to monitor and enhance their quality” and are inspected on this (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). Some form of self-evaluation activity is, therefore, inevitable. Further, there are specific self-evaluation requirements for schools receiving funds as part of the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy (GOK). GOK schools must perform a self-evaluation to plan the effective use of the additional funding (see Chapter 3).

The Flemish Inspectorate and AKOV

AKOV is one of four agencies under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Training and was established in 2009 to oversee all services related to quality improvement of education. AKOV plays an important role in school evaluation as it is responsible for defining the minimum standards for quality education that all schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium must meet. To this end, AKOV sets standard attainment targets and developmental objectives for all schools (see Box 2.1). These provide a framework for school evaluation, both internal and external.

AKOV has set attainment targets (*i.e.* schools must ensure that students meet these targets at a certain point in time) for primary and secondary education. In contrast, AKOV specifies developmental objectives (*i.e.* schools need to account for their efforts to reach these objectives) in nursery education, the first stage of technical and vocational secondary education and for special-needs education at the primary and secondary levels.¹ It is of note that attainment targets and developmental objectives were first implemented in 1998 as a means for the Flemish government to assure minimum quality across schools.

Box 2.1 Attainment targets and developmental objectives in the Flemish Community of Belgium

The Flemish government endorses a “core curriculum” that all schools recognised and funded by the government are required to respect and deliver. This is expressed via attainment targets for the end of key stages of education and developmental objectives during pre-primary education, for the first stage of B-stream secondary education and for special-needs education at primary and secondary levels. Schools are accountable for ensuring that their students meet the attainment targets which denote the “knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which the educational authorities deem necessary and attainable for a specific pupil population”. As such, they are minimum objectives on which schools and educational networks should base their curricula. Curricula will reflect different priorities and cover broader areas.

An example of the nature of attainment targets in primary education

The developmental objectives used in pre-primary and the attainment targets for primary education are organised in five major areas: physical education; art education; Dutch; environmental studies and mathematics. For primary education there are also additional attainment targets for French and additional cross-curricular attainment targets in ICT, learning to learn and social skills. In each case, guiding text on the general principles for the specific content area is provided as well as the concrete attainment targets. For example, mathematics is divided into three domains (numbers, measurement and geometry) each including attainment targets for mathematical comprehension, language and factual knowledge, as well as for mathematical procedures. In addition, there are attainment targets for strategies and problem solving skills and attitudes towards mathematics.

The attainment targets are only provided for the end of primary education, there are no details of curriculum at earlier stages of primary education. Further, they describe a minimum content of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should demonstrate by the end of primary education, but do not detail different levels of student proficiency or mastery of these different areas.

Source: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo.

The Flemish Government has decreed external school evaluation the responsibility of the Flemish Inspectorate (see Chapter 4). There is compulsory inspection for every school that seeks “recognition” by the Flemish Government. “Recognition” implies the receipt of public funding by schools. The Inspectorate must provide advice on whether or not schools are included in the “recognition”. It is then the Flemish Government’s role to accept (or not) the Inspectorate’s recommendations and thus render them valid (invalid). As part of the external school evaluation, the Inspectorate inspects the school’s curriculum to ensure that it addresses the centrally-set attainment targets and developmental objectives. This ensures a minimum quality across schools, at the same time as respecting each individual school’s right to develop its own curriculum. External inspection uses an inspection framework including quality indicators for school context, input, processes and output (the CIPO framework).

Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD)

Each umbrella organisation has its own PBD to provide professional support to schools. These are “among the most important partners of schools in quality assurance” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). The school advisors offer support to different schools within their network, including in-service training, support for self-evaluation and quality assurance (including student assessment and teacher appraisal). A recent focus of training offered by the PBD is on the concept of the school’s “policy-making capacity”. This is seen as a crucial factor in whether the school is able to fully meet its responsibility to assure the quality of education it delivers.²

The PBD also play a role in external school evaluation. In the case that inspectors give a school a negative recommendation, the inspectors may determine whether or not that school has sufficient policy-making capacity to implement a successful improvement plan. If the inspectors judge that this is not the case, the school will be obliged to accept support from the PBD.

Other actors influencing school evaluation

The umbrella organisations can have significant influence on school evaluation, as they may support their schools by offering curricula and, for some of the larger umbrella organisations, also related student assessments. Of course, schools are free to choose whether or not to use these curricula/tests, but in reality many do. The curricula of course will be examined as part of the school inspection to ensure that the minimum attainment targets and developmental objectives are implemented. The tests may be used by schools as part of their internal evaluation process and schools may also choose to show these results to inspectors during an inspection.

The Agency for Educational Services (AGODI, *Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten*) provides administrative and financial services to schools, including the timely implementation of funding and providing support and information to schools in these domains. AGODI compiles data on administrative and financial resources in schools, including on school funding and financing of teaching staff, qualification, number and attendance record of teachers, as well as information on student attendance and truancy.³ AGODI reports these results for the Flemish system, but not for individual schools. But the school-level information is included in the Inspectorate’s school profiles.

Information sources for school evaluation

School external evaluation draws on much information collected by the inspectors during the main inspection and mapped against the CIPO inspection framework (see Chapter 4). However, central information systems have been recently established to strengthen the Inspectorate's information base in determining the focus of inspection. The Ministry of Education and Training runs a Data Warehouse system containing school-specific information on student numbers in total and from “deprived background”⁴, student retention and school staff turnover. Currently, this information is available to the Inspectorate, but not to schools (although there is a proposal to share this with schools). This is of key importance to external school evaluation and the Inspectorate uses this as a basis to generate digital school profiles and reference profiles (*i.e.* profiles of schools sharing similar characteristics). As such, the Inspectorate is able to map available data to the context, input and output indicators within the CIPO inspection framework: context (infrastructure, location, staff recruitment); input (student enrolment by type of programme, student socio-economic background, school staff and their educational career); and output (school career, that is, student progress and effective enrolment; outcomes, that is, subsequent education or career progression for students⁵). The Inspectorate stores this information in the “digital monitor” including data for the past six years. This aids external evaluation, as inspectors can judge a school's evolution on these indicators, as well as benchmarking schools on each indicator against similar schools in the reference profiles. For other key output data within the CIPO inspection framework on student performance and satisfaction (staff, students and partners), when a school is inspected: inspectors may consult school-held information from self-evaluation activities, if the school chooses to present this information during the inspection; the school must provide inspectors with a sample of student tests, examinations and portfolios from the previous two school years.

There has been an increased focus on output and student outcomes in recent years, both in the inspection framework (see Chapter 4) and as a way to monitor the implementation of attainment targets at the system level. Nationwide standardised testing or examinations of all pupils at certain points are not mandated in the Flemish Community of Belgium, but information on student outcomes is available from a number of externally designed tests available to help schools measure their outcomes. These include tests offered to schools as part of the National Assessment Programme (see Box 2.2), other nationally developed or supported tests and tests developed by umbrella organisations. The Ministry of Education and Training runs a special website that offers a selection of student tests for schools (*Toetsen voor scholen*). In addition to the parallel versions of tests from the National Assessment Programme, all registered primary schools can use the Flemish pupil monitoring system (LVS, *Leerlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen*), including a supporting manual of instructions. Schools can use this to monitor student progress in Dutch language and mathematics skills at different stages of their primary education. There is also a tool to monitor children's Dutch language ability at the start of primary education (SALTO). There is no feedback report offered for the SALTO test, but schools can calculate where their school performs in relation to other schools, *i.e.* on the basis of norm data.

There are no specific externally available tests for schools offering special education services, although the LVS can be used by these schools.

Box 2.2 The National Assessment Programme (*Peilingen*)

The National Assessment Programme was introduced in 2002. It aims to give an insight of how well the attainment targets have been implemented at the level of the Flemish school system. As such, students in a representative sample of schools are assessed (minimum 1 500 students). However, participating schools do receive feedback on their students' performance and this can inform school self-evaluation activities. Further, such results are adjusted for school student composition and schools can compare their performance to the average performance of all schools assessed, as well as to schools with comparable student composition. School-level results are not shared elsewhere in the system, *e.g.* the Inspectorate does not receive these results and they do not systematically inform school external evaluation.

A parallel version of the assessment conducted is offered to other schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium via the Ministry of Education and Training's website Tests for Schools (*Toetsen voor scholen*). Schools choosing to conduct these parallel tests will receive a feedback report describing how many students have reached attainment targets, contextual value added results in relation to background characteristics, and including comparative data on similar schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium as well as comparative information from the *Peilingen* representative sample. In 2010, 49 schools, most of which were primary, requested feedback reports.

The information available to schools via the *Peilingen* aims to give feedback on student performance against a range of attainment targets. Therefore, the areas assessed change from year to year, as well as the level of education and the orientation in the case of secondary education (*e.g.* general secondary education at stage 1 [A stream] has already been assessed four times, but the B stream only once). There is no systematic assessment of particular learning areas each time. Eventually, there will be repeat assessments in different areas. The table below presents the assessments conducted or planned in primary education.

	Primary education	
	First assessment	Repeat assessments
Mathematics	2002	2009
Dutch language		
Comprehensive reading	2002	2007 2013
Listening		2007 2013
Environmental studies		
Nature and investigating skills	2005	
Time, space, society and use of information sources	2010	
French language		
Reading, listening, writing and speaking	2008	
Acquiring and processing information and ICT	2012	

For further information see: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/peilingen/.

The interaction between internal and external school evaluation

Currently, the external inspection of schools does not take into account results from the school's self-evaluation. This is a deliberate policy of the Flemish Inspectorate, as it believes this would lead to schools using self-evaluation rather for accountability than for improvement (*i.e.* to influence the focus of external evaluation) and the inclusion of school self-evaluation results in the published inspection report, which is deemed

inappropriate. However, schools are inspected on their efforts to monitor and enhance their quality. This means that external inspections do examine school quality assurance processes, which would typically include self-evaluation activities. Further, the recently adopted differentiated approach to school inspections implies that schools with better developed policy-making capacity and quality assurance processes will be inspected less regularly. The logic, therefore, is that this approach will stimulate schools to develop effective self-evaluation activities. This reflects a general approach by the Inspectorate to complement its traditional “control” function, with encouraging schools to develop their policies and practices for improvement.

Structures to promote consultation and co-operation

There are some structures in place to promote consultation and co-operation among schools and within schools. Each school belongs to an educational network and can choose to be represented by an umbrella organisation for policy discussions among networks and with the Ministry of Education and Training. Further, the Ministry of Education and Training promotes co-operation among schools by offering incentives for schools to join a “school community”. The vast majority of schools belong to a school community and benefit from additional resources and/or organisational advantages (see Chapter 1). Each school has a school council comprising key stakeholders in the school and the local community, which has an advisory or consultative role regarding the school’s policy. The Participation Decree in 2004 stipulates that all schools should promote participation of key stakeholders. Specifically it is obligatory: for secondary schools to have a student council; for primary schools to have a student council if at least 10% of the regular students aged 11 to 13 demand this; and for all schools to have an educational council if at least 10% of the school staff request this, as well as a parent council if at least 10% of parents request this. In each case, the councils play an important advisory role and members must be elected. Further, one of the basic teacher competencies stipulated in the 2007 Decree sets expectations for professional collaboration and participation in school policy (see Chapter 3).

Strengths

Schools have the major responsibility for the school improvement process

It is a considerable strength that schools carry the major responsibility for their improvement and related quality assurance systems. There has been recent legal clarification that schools hold the primary responsibility for school quality (the Decree of 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. The OECD review team formed the impression that there is a strong and shared appreciation of school autonomy and the importance of developing expertise at the school level and that many schools are readily taking up this agenda. Indeed, it is a long established tradition in the Flemish Community of Belgium that schools design and implement their own student tests and award student qualifications. Importantly, there is also a mechanism for some external evaluation of schools’ level of responsibility and/or capabilities to assure their quality via the inspection of school policy-making capacity (see Chapter 4).

The Ministry of Education and Training fosters a degree of common understanding of basic quality in schools

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 has a mechanism to monitor the implementation of these attainment targets via the Inspectorate's evaluation of schools' curricula and their results (see Chapter 4).

Further, there is a central monitoring of student mastery of attainment targets via the National Assessment Programme and this should also promote their implementation by schools. The original concept driving the development of the quality control system in the Flemish Community of Belgium was to allow the authorities to "control the minimum and also examine the effectiveness of schools" (DED, 1998). The latter mainly refers to the monitoring of student progress and the added value brought by schools in terms of student outcomes.

At the release of results from each round of the National Assessment Programme, the Ministry of Education and Training organises a conference for all key stakeholders to discuss the implications of these results. This could be in terms of the further refinement of the attainment targets or developmental objectives and therefore promotes a regular discussion about basic quality in Flemish schools.

Availability of robust student assessment tools for primary schools

In addition to the possibility for primary and secondary schools to administer the parallel tests from the National Assessment Programme, the Ministry of Education and Training offers two tools for schools to evaluate student progress during pre-primary and primary education. Schools can use these tools to monitor student progress in Dutch language and mathematics skills throughout primary education. With the correct leadership, schools can use these as an effective and key part of their self-evaluation activities. For example, schools can evaluate children's language needs and adjust and adapt their instruction as required. Further, in the case of the language monitoring tool SALTO, schools have access to a robust measuring tool, but have to calculate the results for themselves and produce their own feedback reports. This can stimulate a culture for monitoring and analysing results as part of the school's self-evaluation activities. In both cases, the tools provide the opportunity for timely diagnostic feedback to schools and teachers to follow up for student improvement.

During the OECD review, teachers at primary schools described a range of other available tests they used with primary and pre-primary pupils, including assessments to evaluate specific aspects of pupils' language skills. In addition, primary schools often use "method bound" tests, specifically linked to the textbooks they use. Further, two of the larger educational networks offer student tests for the final year of primary school (see Box 2.3). These are aligned to the respective curriculum. The OECD review team saw examples where schools use these results as a key part of school self-evaluation and school leaders encourage the staff to think of the results as an indicator of school performance overall, that is, all teachers in all classes contribute towards this.

Box 2.3 The major network developed student tests for primary schools

The two main tests are provided by OVSG and VSKO and both are for students in the 6th grade of primary schools.

The OVSG-*toets* (OVSG's test) is administered in the 6th grade and is also used by the majority of the GO! network schools and some private schools. It focuses on the breadth of the OVSG's curriculum and attainment targets in Dutch language, mathematics, environmental studies, arts education and French, but remains independent of textbooks used by schools. Practical tests were also available in 2010 in Dutch speaking, French speaking, Physical Education, Technology and Musical Training. All areas of learning are, therefore, represented and different methods of evaluation are combined. In June 2010, 19 600 students in 731 schools took this test at the end of primary education. Each year, the test has a central theme. In 2010 it was the theatre, including tests of cognitive and practical skills. Schools receive resources and student workbooks, instructions and CD-Rom with audio and video and digital versions of the tests. There is a Youtube movie example of students taking practical assessments. Since 2006/07, the processing of results has been online and results can be compared to average Flemish results but also to reference groups (schools with a similar profile) and to previous years' results.

The VSKO's *Inter-Diocesan Proeven* (IDP) are 6th grade tests based on VSKO's curriculum and attainment targets in Dutch language and mathematics. Largely using a multiple choice format, with some fill-in dictation and spelling, they have been available since the 1970s and are now taken written and electronically by almost 90% of all Flemish Catholic school students. In May 2010, just under 20 000 pupils took the test (2 000 more than in 2009). Schools receive overall results and results for different domains of language and mathematics. Results are reported compared to the national average for Catholic schools participating in IDP that year, as well as to the school's "GOK family group", that is, schools that share similar student population or contextual characteristics (see Annex D for GOK family reference group characteristics and 2009-10 percentages). Schools are guided to VSKO's website where, each year after test results have been distributed, a number of articles are posted with suggestions for related improvement strategies.

Source: OECD review.

An increasingly information rich environment for school evaluation

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;
- Supporting Pedagogical Advisory Services for each school network which in turn have developed student assessment and evaluation tools for schools to use and offer support to schools to develop self-evaluation capacity.

There is also a growing awareness of the need to make better use of centrally held information and to compile more information where necessary (*e.g.* information to inform student outcomes for school inspections [further education, career] and a proposal to open the information in the Data Warehouse to schools).

Increased focus on the importance of engaging all stakeholders in 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. For example, the Centre for Experience based Education's (ECEGO – *Experisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs*) tool to measure primary student involvement and wellbeing, and the SAM-scale (Scale for Attitude Measurement: *Schaal voor AttitudeMeting*) to assess secondary students' attitudes such as flexibility, diligence and responsibility. Plus, the Student Organisation of Flanders (VSK) has developed an evaluation tool for teachers to explore students' responses to their learning experiences (see Chapter 3). Parents' input into school policy development is also assured by decree, and representatives of the parents' associations informed review team members that they are in the process of developing a questionnaire for schools to use to explore the extent to which they are "parent friendly". Schools will have access to the questionnaire and will be able to tell their story.

Challenges

The Ministry of Education and Training does not mandate or steer school self-evaluation

As described above, the Flemish education system is organised around the constitutional principle of freedom of education, which guarantees every natural or legal person the right to create and organise schools autonomously. The Ministry of Education and Training interferes only minimally in the organisation of schooling and has limited powers to steer school evaluation. Traditionally, schools have been governed by school boards or governing bodies, which operate within the umbrella organisation of each educational network (Day *et al.*, 2008). While school leaders are accountable to their boards, there is a tradition of school autonomy, with each school in charge of defining its own goals for quality within the minimum conditions set by the government. This organisation of education provides limited room for national authorities to intervene and ensure consistently effective school evaluation practice.

The governance context and strong tradition of freedom of education have resulted in resistance to initiatives that can be portrayed as top-down imposition from the government. Hence, while schools are obliged to monitor their educational quality, the Ministry of Education and Training does not further specify the areas to be evaluated and it has not promoted any particular model for schools to use in their evaluation approaches. This large degree of freedom may help encourage local ownership and innovation, but the lack of specificity can also be interpreted as indicating a low priority to school self-evaluation. While some school leaders may have the vision and capacity to implement effective school quality systems on their own, others may be inhibited by the lack of guidance. This may contribute to exacerbating already large between-school differences in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

However, even though the Ministry of Education and Training's room for manoeuvre is limited by the specific governance context of the Flemish education system, there are a number of levers that it can use to influence school evaluation practice. These include strategic leadership, funding, provision of training and dissemination of tools and information. As will be explored in more detail below, the OECD review team sees

further room for the Ministry of Education and Training to use some of these levers to a greater degree to guide and support effective school evaluation practice.

School evaluation is not well embedded in a larger vision for evaluation and assessment

The recent emphasis in the Flemish Community of Belgium on working with evidence and implementing school evaluation as a way to promote improvement in all schools is commendable. However, while the Ministry of Education and Training has helped develop a more information-rich environment for school evaluation, it has not established a powerful and persuasive narrative which aligns policy, strategy and practice around evaluation and improvement (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming). There did not appear to be a clear commonly understood definition of the purpose of school evaluation across the Flemish Community of Belgium. In interviews with school-level professionals, the OECD review team had the impression that school evaluation was being perceived as a controlling mechanism rather than as a tool for schools to improve their own practice. The potential of school evaluation, internal and external, to help achieve educational goals and strive towards excellence was not commonly understood and no clear models for school self-evaluation had emerged generally.

The potential for synergies between different evaluation approaches is not fully exploited

Currently, the different elements constituting the framework for school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium are not widely seen as a coherent whole. 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 the schools visited by the OECD review team, policies regarding evaluation and assessment were often seen as a set of separate initiatives operating in compartments rather than part of a coherent evaluation strategy to improve school outcomes. Partly as a result, necessary synergies between various evaluation and assessment approaches are not being realised. The OECD review team identified three areas where linkages and complementarities between different evaluation aspects could be further developed and strengthened more systematically:

Linkages between self-evaluation and inspection

First, school self-evaluation and inspection are deliberately disconnected from each other in the Flemish Community of Belgium. This is in contrast to 13 OECD countries where self-evaluations are required and form a component of inspections in primary and lower secondary schools (see Annex E). In respect of the freedom of education principle, the Inspectorate is not entitled to obtain the school's self-evaluation results unless the school offers to provide them. There is a perception that using the school's own evaluation results as a basis for inspections would overemphasise the accountability function of self-evaluation at the expense of the improvement function. As a result of this deliberate disconnection, the Inspectorate may not be fully aware of the schools' own evaluation and planning cycle, its priorities and interpretation of recent developments.

The limited complementarity of internal and external school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium makes it difficult to realise synergies between the two processes. It may lead to a costly duplication of data gathering and evaluation processes, and

significantly reduces the potential of inspections to test, affirm, strengthen and broaden school self-evaluation. It also limits the role that inspection can play in helping schools build their evaluative capacity and report progress effectively. In other countries, it has been found that external review can potentially play a key role in reinforcing and supporting school self-evaluation by either validating or challenging the school's own findings (more on this below).

Linkages between school evaluation and teacher appraisal

Second, stronger links could be established between school evaluation and teacher appraisal. In fact, the extent and rigour of teacher appraisal in the Flemish Community of Belgium is highly variable across schools. While teacher appraisal has been mandated by decree as a four-year cycle comprising both appraisal and evaluation interviews, there are strong indications that the implementation of teacher appraisal is not consistently effective across the Flemish Community of Belgium, partly because “schools do not have a tradition of conducting teacher assessments” and “still lack adequate expertise to perform teacher appraisal” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010, p. 100)

Yet, school evaluation could strongly benefit from the development of more systematic teacher appraisal practice. In order to implement a comprehensive and rounded approach to school self-evaluation, it is key to develop ways of systematically evaluating the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in individual classrooms across the school. It is only with such evidence that schools can adequately identify strengths as well as aspects of practice that may require priority attention in the school development plan (Nusche *et al.*, 2011). There is strong evidence from international studies indicating that the most effective way of improving school performance in any system is through focusing on improving the quality of teaching practice (OECD, 2005; McKinsey and Company, 2007; Pont *et al.*, 2008).

Inspections could also potentially play a stronger role in monitoring teaching and learning processes in Flemish classrooms. In fact, “teacher appraisal policy” is one of the process indicators of the CIPPO inspection framework used by inspectors, which also indicates that teacher appraisal is an important element of the school's policy-making capacities. However, the OECD review team formed the impression that there is room for inspectors to provide a more systematic external validation of the processes put in place by schools to organise teacher appraisal. This would include holding the school leader accountable for implementing systematic teacher appraisal practices.

Linkages between school evaluation and school leader appraisal

Third, the appraisal of school leaders is the responsibility of the school's governing board and is not directly linked to either inspections or school self-evaluation. School leader appraisal, like teacher appraisal, follows a four-year cycle and is based on individualised job descriptions, appraisal discussions and a final evaluation discussion and evaluation report. The evaluator will typically be a delegate of the school group (in community education), the local magistrate for education (in provincial and municipal education) or a designated volunteer (in Catholic education and other privately-run subsidised schools) (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).

In addition to the appraisal of school leaders by the school's governing board, the Inspectorate also checks on key responsibilities of school leaders such as the development

of school vision, school staff quality and management of staff, logistics and well-being and educational policy. However, the inspection visits do not seem to be systematically informed of the outcome of the governing board's appraisal of the school leader, and the quality criteria used are not necessarily the same. Also, no information was available regarding the degree to which the evaluation of school leadership is part of school self-evaluation and whether it is generally influenced by the results of the governing board's appraisal of the school leader.

Insufficient emphasis on improvement and excellence in attainment targets

In the deregulated context of Flemish education, the development of some commonality and comparability of quality standards across schools is a clear challenge. The existence of system-wide attainment targets is a clear strength of the system and provides some indication as to the minimum level of performance that all students should reach. However, what is lacking in the Flemish Community of Belgium is some more extended guidance regarding different levels of proficiency that can be reached by students and some kind of aspirational standards illustrating the level of performance that can be achieved by the most successful schools. The attainment targets do not provide sufficient stimulus for schools to strive for excellence and continuous improvement.

Schools must ensure that all students meet the attainment targets – this represents the minimum learning objectives for students and schools. If schools use the parallel tests, they can see how their students perform against these attainment targets. However, there are no clear criteria or indicators to help schools evaluate the aggregated student performance levels beyond these minimum objectives. Hence, there is a high degree of variability in the nature and rigour of judgements made by schools when evaluating their own quality. Many schools are coming to their own evaluative judgements in isolation, with the consequent risk that they might be out-of-line and perhaps too limited in expectation in comparison with quality standards applied in the best performing schools (Nusche *et al.*, 2011).

There is a high degree of variation in school policy-making capacity within the Flemish Community of Belgium

There are indications that schools vary widely in their policy-making capacity, which includes their ability to work with evaluative information and plan strategically for improvement. The development and open promotion of a variety of instruments and approaches for student assessment and school self-evaluation requires an initial level of competence and commitment if it is to have real impact. However, a significant proportion of school leaders and key staff may not have the confidence and competencies to develop and maintain effective bottom-up approaches to evaluation and improvement planning. As a result, while some form of quality monitoring can be identified generally, its rigour and impact on practice is highly variable across schools. There is a risk that data are used mostly in a descriptive way and that process evaluation may focus more on administrative aspects than on the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on student outcomes.

The extent to which action may or may not be taken is very much at the discretion of individuals, particularly the school leader. There is no requirement for a school to give its own account to its community of where it stands currently and what its priorities are for improvement. The potential of self-evaluation reporting to engage stakeholders – students and parents – in the work of the school has also not been sufficiently exploited.

While the Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) have recently focused on developing professional development offers intended to build schools' policy-making capacities, little is known about the quality of the support offered by the different PBDs. An evaluation of the PBD is planned for 2012/13. Based on interviews conducted in schools and with stakeholders, the OECD review team formed the impression that there are concerns about whether the PBDs do indeed have sufficient resources and capacity to help schools develop and maintain the expertise necessary for implementing effective school evaluation and improvement strategies.

Lack of information flow impedes school evaluation efforts

While the OECD review team notes there have been efforts to create an increasingly information rich environment, there seems much room to improve the use of this information for school evaluation activities. 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 or key stakeholder satisfaction (two of the four aspects of "Output" within the CIPO inspection framework) before it conducts its preliminary investigation. A shift to a differentiated inspection necessitates high quality data on "Output", as this is the major focus of the inspection (see Chapter 4). On a similar note, the results of schools as part of the national assessment programme are not communicated to the Inspectorate, as these are perceived as part of a school's self-evaluation and development. Indeed, the Inspectorate may not necessarily benefit from results of a school's self-evaluation.

Policy recommendations

Recent moves to strengthen external evaluation, self-evaluation and accountability face considerable challenges in establishing themselves within a culture that places high value on the educational freedom of each school and educational network. While there is strong political will to encourage effective school evaluation practice, the vision and purpose of school evaluation has not been communicated clearly enough.

Leadership at the level of the Ministry of Education and Training will be essential to build a culture of evaluation focussed on evaluating teaching and learning practice and its relationship to student outcomes. Government policy should articulate much more clearly the legitimacy of a focus on achieving excellence in teaching and learning for both external evaluation and self-evaluation and that such a focus will be the key concern of wider accountabilities (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming). The Ministry of Education and Training should also promote a better integration of self-evaluation and external inspection so as to create clarity, coherence and consistency across different elements of the school evaluation framework (more on this below). As part of this strategy, the OECD review team recommends the following steps:

- Further clarify common goals and expectations with a view to encouraging excellence and continuous improvement;
- Strengthen consistency and coherence of different elements of school evaluation;
- Promote the use of evaluation and assessment tools by schools for improvement;
- Further strengthen professional development for effective school self-evaluation;
- Strengthen information flow on key indicators from and to schools.

Further clarify common goals and expectations with a view to encouraging excellence and continuous 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. This requires the development of a clearer set of reference goals and criteria for common orientation across the Flemish Community of Belgium. The education system could benefit from the development of more extended guidance regarding expected learning progressions and criteria to assess different levels of proficiency in various subjects (Nusche *et al.*, 2011).

The Ministry of Education and Training, together with key stakeholder groups, could evaluate the potential for developing more specific learning progressions that describe the way that students typically move through learning in each subject area. Learning progressions can provide a picture from beginning learning to expertise in particular learning areas. In that way, assessment based on the progressions can be used to identify different levels of proficiency and to measure growth in student performance, rather than just determining whether minimum standards have been achieved or not.

To assist schools in their everyday assessment and evaluation work, the Ministry of Education and Training together with stakeholder groups, should also facilitate the development of assessment criteria for rating different aspects of performance and exemplars illustrating student performance at different levels of proficiency. Such rubrics and exemplars can be used to define what constitutes adequate, good and excellent work and can enable teachers to clarify clear assessment criteria and quality definitions. Such materials can be promoted as voluntary resources that teachers can use as signposts and support in their assessment. This guidance can help raise aspirations and communicate a focus on excellence and continuous improvement.

For the purpose of whole-school self-evaluation, schools also need further support in making the link between teaching and learning processes and student outcomes. To this end, it would be helpful for schools to use the same framework of process quality indicators that is being used by the Inspectorate. One way of ensuring greater use by schools of the CIPPO inspection framework and its process indicators is to further develop the integration of internal and external school evaluation (see below).

Strengthen consistency and coherence of different elements of school evaluation

Ensure a better integration between self-evaluation and inspection

Self-evaluation is integral to continuous improvement and allows schools to take ownership and accept responsibility for their own improvement cycles. However, self-evaluation can also be subject to self delusion where assumptions are not challenged and power relationships in the school community have an undue influence on what is evaluated and the nature of the judgements themselves (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming). A combination of self-evaluation and inspection, as used in the Flemish Community of Belgium, is an approach which can maximise the benefits of both while counteracting the limitations arising from an over reliance on the use of only one.

However, the potential for school self-evaluation and inspection to mutually reinforce each other has not been fully realised in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Better alignment is needed between policy and practice in both external evaluation and self-evaluation. In particular, there is a need to ensure that the goals, indicators and criteria used in both spheres are sufficiently similar as to create a common language about priorities and about the key factors which influence high quality teaching and learning (see also Chapter 4). Lack of clarity about what matters is likely to reinforce confusion and relegate self-evaluation to something which serves to satisfy demands for external accountability rather than creating a platform for an exchange based on reliable and comparable evidence (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming).

A school self-evaluation project conducted by the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates of Education (SICI) found that several elements of external support are necessary to enhance school self-evaluation as a driver for improvement (see Box 2.4). The Flemish Community of Belgium has already introduced the necessary legal framework to clarify that schools are responsible for the quality of education they deliver. In going further, SICI's findings suggest that it would be helpful for self-evaluation to be better aligned with external inspections. Such alignment could be promoted by:

- Providing schools with access to the school-specific information stored in the Data Warehouse, which will make the decision for the inspection focus more transparent;
- Recommending the use of the same set of criteria in both external and self-evaluation;
- Stressing the importance of teaching and learning processes and their links to student outcomes for self-evaluation leading to more open discussion of teachers' practice;
- Creating a framework for a school presentation during inspection which starts with their evaluation of teaching quality, student outcomes and the steps they are taking to optimise the relationship between the two;
- Having a stronger focus on how the school is going about its own self-evaluation and using the results to improve learning (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming).

In 19 OECD education systems, there are requirements for schools to conduct self-evaluations (see Annex E, Table E.3). Among these systems, 13 include school self-evaluation as a component of the school inspection process. However, the form such self-evaluation requirements take varies considerably. While these are devised or organised by central, state or provincial authorities in many systems, in the Czech Republic, Portugal, the Netherlands and Sweden, schools or school boards organise these. Further, in the Netherlands and Sweden, self-evaluation is unstructured and varies from school to school depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As such, schools still exercise a high degree of freedom in how they approach their self-evaluation activities.

Box 2.4 Outcomes of SICI's Effective School Self-Evaluation Project

The Effective School Self-Evaluation project, undertaken by the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates of Education (SICI) with European Commission funding, involved analysis of the quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation in 14 member states within the European Union. The project concluded that self-evaluation required a number of elements of national support if it was to be fully effective as a driver for improvement. Four main elements of this national support were highlighted:

The provision of **high quality data** on pupil outcomes and key processes, analysed and presented to schools in ways which make it easy for them to benchmark themselves appropriately against similar schools.

The development and maintenance of a common set of **quality indicators**, along with tools and guidance to support their use, establishing a shared language and shared criteria for evaluation.

Programmes of professional development and other **support for teachers and school leaders** which equip them with the skills to undertake self-evaluation and improvement effectively.

National or regionally organised programmes of occasional **external reviews** or inspections to moderate and calibrate self-evaluation consistently across the country and provide the basis for the development of national indicators and tools.

A coherent **national framework of legislation, policies and advice** that places appropriate duties and responsibilities on schools to evaluate and improve their provision.

Source: SICI (2003).

Ensure appropriate articulation between school evaluation and teacher appraisal

Arguably, the most important area for inspection and self-evaluation is what happens at the points where learning itself takes place. Failure to place teaching and learning at the heart of the evaluation process sends ambiguous signals about what matters and means that evaluation judgements can only be based on proxy indicators (Santiago *et al.*, forthcoming). Given that the systems of school evaluation and teacher appraisal and feedback have both the objective of maintaining standards and improving student performance, there are likely to be great benefits from the synergies between school evaluation and teacher appraisal. To achieve the greatest impact, the focus of school evaluation should either be linked to or have an effect on the focus of teacher appraisal (OECD, 2009). 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.

Reinforce linkages between school evaluation and school leadership appraisal

Further enhancing the performance appraisal of school leadership is also important in providing leaders with external feedback, identifying areas of needed improvement and offering targeted support to improve practice. The Flemish authorities could consider providing resources to develop training and disseminate materials for governing boards on how to undertake effective performance review of school leaders. The evaluation of school leadership should also form a key element of school self-evaluation processes. It would be helpful for the Inspectorate to systematically have access to and consider documentation from principal appraisals as a basis for inspection visits to schools.

Promote the use of evaluation and assessment tools by schools for improvement

The development of an information-rich environment will provide the Flemish Community of Belgium with a strong basis to develop a multi-faceted school evaluation framework. However, as described above, there is a need to communicate more clearly about the different elements available to support school self-evaluation and promote their use. The OECD review team proposes a two-fold strategy involving (1) 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 and (2) dissemination of evidence about schools effectively using different self-evaluation tools to improve school outcomes.

Conduct a comparative evaluation of the externally developed self-evaluation tools for schools

The Ministry of Education and Training, together with the Inspectorate and the PBDs could conduct a review and evaluation of the reliability and validity of different student cognitive tests available to schools. This stock-taking exercise should focus on the ability of the different tests to measure student progress and the added value that the school brings given the students' background characteristics and prior learning. It should cover widely used tools and tests including the NAP, school feedback project, VSKO and OVSG tests. The mapping exercise should provide an overview indicating for each assessment tool the:

- extent of coverage of the Flemish attainment targets or developmental objectives;
- subjects and range of skills covered;
- format of test (*e.g.* multiple choice *v.* open constructed; computer based *v.* paper and pencil; written *v.* oral; individual *v.* team work);
- level of feedback reported (individual student results, class groupings, school average, network average, average for the Flemish Community of Belgium);
- ability to monitor progress (stable elements in test to compare changes over time; ability/flexibility for educators to re-administer the tests to monitor student improvement);
- reporting and interpretation of results (contextualisation of results, adjustment for student characteristics [socio-economic background, gender, language spoken]; comparison to averages [number of schools included and student characteristics in those schools, *i.e.* is the average representative or skewed?]; information sheets

provided to aid interpretation of results; training and/or examples of how results can be used for improvement).

Promote examples of effective practice

There is also room for the Flemish education system to benefit to a larger extent from practice-based expertise and from the many successful evaluation practices that have already been developed by various schools. The Ministry of Education and Training could play a greater role in disseminating and sharing effective practices across schools and educational networks. The Pedagogical Advisory Services should be encouraged to collect examples of good evaluation practice from their work with schools. The Ministry of Education and Training could facilitate the development of guidance for schools on how to select good examples, facilitate quality assurance of such examples and feed evidence of good practice back into the system. One appropriate way to learn more about effective self-evaluation already happening in the Flemish Community of Belgium would be to conduct a thematic inspection of a sample of schools on issues such as constructive use of data, effective classroom observation and development of school improvement plans.

Further strengthen professional development for effective school self-evaluation

Prioritise support to building school policy-making capacity

As the Flemish education system is built around freedom of education and relies strongly on the evaluation and assessment capacities of school level professionals, it is important to continue investing in the capacity of school leaders and teachers to design effective whole school evaluation approaches. Teachers and school leaders not only need to develop the capacity to collect and analyse information for self-evaluation, but they also need to understand, interpret and make decisions based on evaluative information and report on progress to students, parents and their local communities.

As described in Chapter 3, the process of self-evaluation is hugely dependent on the capacity of school leadership teams to stimulate engagement and mobilise school staff around common improvement goals. Research internationally has shown that school leadership focused on goal-setting, assessment, appraisal and evaluation can positively influence teacher performance and learning environments (Pont *et al.*, 2008). Hence, building the capacity of school leaders should be a key priority of the system. Elements of a national strategy for strengthening school leadership should include: establishing a Flemish framework for leadership competencies; developing new leadership roles; refinements to leadership training and a Ministry-funded project on competency development; and provision of appropriate and accessible resources (Chapter 3).

For school evaluation to lead to improvement it is essential that school staff learn to interpret and translate evaluative information into actions. One option to encourage schools to follow up on self-evaluation processes is to require them to systematically develop improvement plans based on their own monitoring information. The key message should be that all schools, no matter how well achieving they already are, have room for further improvement.

More emphasis should also be placed on monitoring the effectiveness of school programmes and teaching approaches for different groups of students. In part, this may

involve providing additional training resources for teachers designed to support good collection and use of evaluative information. Such resources could be made available through the Internet, but should also be disseminated through workshops and targeted professional learning programmes, perhaps working with groups of similar schools or with universities and teacher education institutions (Nusche *et al.*, 2011). Embedding such support in initial teacher education, and particularly in training for members of the leadership team would be a potentially effective way of building school policy-making capacity.

At the same time, school self-evaluation activities should not remain an exclusive exercise for the school leadership team but should engage teachers, students and their parents. The systematic consultation of stakeholder views in self-evaluation can considerably deepen reflection about school practices and their effectiveness. Students in particular have a critical role to play in determining how schools and classrooms can be improved (Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2007; MacBeath *et al.*, 2000), even though they need support to learn how to provide powerful feedback (Pekrul and Levin, 2007). There are several approaches to engaging students' feedback, such as systematically using student surveys in schools and involving students in the feedback to teachers on their teaching (see also Chapter 3). Indeed, successful cases of Flemish schools making use of such evaluation approaches should be highlighted and shared.

Conduct an external review of the tools and services offered by the Pedagogical Advisory Services

The OECD review team strongly supports the planned evaluation of the quality of services provided by the Pedagogical Advisory Services. Like schools, the PBDs of each umbrella organisation are expected to monitor their own quality. However, there has never been an external inspection to validate the PBDs' self-monitoring. PBDs are expected to provide "qualitative school guidance" but in line with the principle of freedom of education, they are autonomous to define what "qualitative school guidance" means in the context of their umbrella organisation.

In this context, an external inspection of the PBDs should focus on whether they fulfil the requirement for self monitoring of their quality. This should include an external checking of the processes put in place by PBDs to evaluate the quality of their services offered to develop school policy-making capacity, which is instrumental for schools to improving their outcomes.

Strengthen information flow on key indicators from and to schools

Provide access for schools to information in the Data Warehouse

The OECD review team strongly supports the proposal to give schools access to information in the Data Warehouse. This would allow schools to benchmark against other schools with similar context and input factors. Further, it will be useful to present centrally held information in such a way as these highlight the CIPO inspection framework and feed into school self-evaluation activities (see Chapter 4).

Ensure schools systematically provide performance information to the Inspectorate

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 more performance information from schools. The Inspectorate has adopted a risk-based approach to school inspection, thus moving away from full inspections as originally conceived in the quality control system. Currently, the Inspectorate does not have regular performance information for schools on which to base its risk assessment. With the current approach inspectors are only presented with a sample of school performance data during the inspection. There seems an urgent need to strengthen the Inspectorate's "screening" information base by establishing a protocol whereby schools provide on an annual basis selected data on student performance from their chosen monitoring systems. Such data would be for the Inspectorate's eyes only and would not be accessible to other actors. This would provide key missing information on the output part of the CIPO inspection framework. It is of note that in 2007/08, 94% of Flemish lower secondary school teachers were in schools whose principal reported retention and pass rates of students were considered with high or moderate importance in school evaluations (information on student enrolment and progression is held centrally by the Inspectorate). The equivalent reports were: 86% for student tests scores and 80% on other student outcomes (see Annex E). This indicates that *de facto* there is already a strong focus on a wider information base of outcomes for school evaluations, as reported by Flemish lower secondary school principals, now it is just a matter of sharing that information with the Inspectorate before it starts the preliminary inspection visit.

Improve availability and use of objective output measures for Flemish schools

Further, consideration should be given to strengthening the central information base of objective measures of student outcomes. Currently, this comprises information on schools participating in either international surveys or the national assessment programme. Plus, at the sub-system level there is comparable information available for schools administering one of the network tests at the end of primary education. In education systems with early differentiation of students into different school types, a key tool to promote the equity of access for all students is to inform such decisions with objective, robust data. For example, in the Netherlands, 85% of primary schools choose to administer the national assessment for 11 to 12-year-olds at the end of primary education – the "CITO test" (Shewbridge *et al.*, 2010). Indeed, Dutch research on the performance of students with an immigrant background on the CITO test and their subsequent educational pathways adds weight to the importance of these results as robust predictors of student progression through secondary education. Teacher recommendations remain the primary factor in determining students' orientation, however, in the few cases where teacher recommendations deviated from the performance assessment in the CITO test, students changed school type at a later stage (Herweijer, 2009).

There is room to improve schools' use of the parallel versions of the national assessment programme. A thorough evaluation of the NAP parallel tests and other available tests should help clarify the advantages of these tools for school self-evaluation. While the NAP provides useful and stable information on the Flemish education system by monitoring a breadth of topics, the Ministry of Education and Training could conduct a survey of schools to determine the demand for such tools at the school level and how these could be made most relevant for self-evaluation. This may include the possibility of

building on the concept of parallel tests to offer a range of tests for schools in particular topics and at different education levels.

An option to provide some comparable data for Flemish primary schools on core areas would be to devise a common equating of network tests administered at the end of primary education. This could capitalise on the suggested review of the major educational network tests and other tools (see above). Such an approach was used in Australia for many years to equate State and Territory tests and provide information for Australia as a whole. The starting point is that all networks are obliged to ensure coverage in their curricula of the Flemish attainment targets and developmental objectives. As such, it follows that there would be a certain degree of commonality in areas tested among the different network tests.

Notes

1. Readers can consult the attainment targets and developmental objectives at the following site: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/.
2. Van Petegem and Vanhoof (2009) define a school's policy-making capacity as "the extent to which schools use the available room for policy making to come to a continuous process of retaining or changing their work in order to improve their educational quality and attain both the external and self-imposed objectives".
3. Readers can access AGODI annual reports and other materials from its website: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/agodi/default.htm.
4. The Flemish Community uses a weighted funding system attributing more funds for students with "deprived" characteristics as judged in four main research-based indicators: parental education; home language; family income; and area of residence.
5. These have only been available to the Inspectorate over the past year. The school profiles now include information on students' further education, disaggregated by school and study course or discipline. Data on student career are currently being developed in collaboration with the Public Employment Service of Flanders (VDAB).

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Chapter 3

School self-evaluation

This chapter gives an overview of the major features of school self-evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium, including: different procedures currently used, such as tools, measures and processes for self-evaluation; how self-evaluation results are used for improvement, how they are shared within and among schools and the extent to which they are used during the school inspection process; and the competencies and capacity for school self-evaluation, considering both teacher and school leader qualification requirements and rights to professional development. It then analyses the current strengths and challenges to school self-evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium and recommends some areas for further policy development.

This chapter analyses approaches to internal school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium (*i.e.* school self-evaluation).

Context and features

Introduction

Flemish schools hold the main responsibility for evaluation and school quality (the Decree on Quality of Education, 2009). Schools have the duty to monitor their educational quality and they are inspected on whether or not they have established a comprehensive quality assurance system. These factors mean that some form of self-evaluation is inevitable. The Flemish Community of Belgium's principle of freedom of education entitles schools to develop their own policies on education quality and quality assurance to fit their situational contexts. This means that schools are free to decide their procedures for self-evaluation and how to use the results. This is influenced by the competencies and capacity of those involved. In this section we first examine Flemish school self-evaluation procedures, before looking at use of self-evaluation results, and competencies and capacity for self-evaluation.

School self-evaluation procedures in the Flemish Community of Belgium

In the last few years there have been more tools and measures available to schools for use in their self-evaluation efforts (see Chapter 2 for an overview). It is increasingly an "information-rich environment" (Ministry of Education and Training and University of Antwerp, 2010). Schools can gain feedback internally using a range of sources, both quantitative and qualitative. These cover different aspects of school life and educational performance and provide useful input for school self-evaluation. There are three main sources:

- External tests of pupil performance available from networks and the Ministry of Education and Training and, for some, results from the National Assessment Programme and international assessments such as PISA (see Chapter 2).
- Other externally available self-evaluation tools and processes, particularly eliciting opinion and satisfaction of key stakeholders (teachers, pupils and parents) and involvement in university- and network-led processes to gather data collaboratively, *e.g.* the universities' school feedback system.
- Internally developed tools and processes, designed to capture specific qualitative features of pupil experience and school life (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Examples of self-evaluation procedures developed by schools visited during the OECD review

While school self-evaluation procedures vary widely, many schools choose to develop internal self-evaluation tools and processes. These are often developed for use with individual students but then can be aggregated to the class, year, subject department or school level. Examples of school-developed internal evaluation tools and processes that the OECD review team encountered include:

- **Formative examinations and tests:** All schools visited during the review used student tests developed by teachers. The extent of testing varied by school. Examples of good collaboration in secondary schools included teachers of the same subject working together to develop courses and to ensure consistency of student assessment. There were also examples of specific school policies on testing, including intense assessment in the first two months of school and reduced emphasis on assessment in vocational tracks (BSO).
- **Eliciting student voice:** Secondary schools are legally obliged to have some form of students' council or student group, generally representing each year group (Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, 2004). Students reported to the OECD review team that they can make suggestions, including those related to teaching, testing, examinations and scheduling. Some schools may develop a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain feedback from students about the social aspects of learning and learning skills, including opinion surveys (see also below).
- **Parental feedback:** In all schools visited during the review teachers sought feedback from parents, for example, via student report cards or at three-way meetings with teachers, students and parents. While such feedback was mainly geared towards supporting individual students, schools may also adjust their general processes based on this.
- **Teacher observation:** Teacher observation by school leaders or peers was not systematic in the schools visited. In some schools it happened occasionally. The OECD review visit to one secondary school identified an example from a few years ago where teachers had organised their own peer teaching project, sitting in on groups and looking at the classes of more experienced teachers, with the support of the umbrella organisation for Provincial education (POV).

Source: OECD review.

Self-evaluation procedures vary greatly from school to school. In theory, schools can choose to use externally developed tools that are available to many other schools, and this can bring a degree of commonality to self-evaluation procedures, but it remains up to the school whether or not to use these tools. Further, when schools do choose to use externally developed tools, they may follow up on the results of these in different ways. However, the OECD review team identifies two emerging trends influencing self-evaluation procedures adopted by schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium:

- **An emphasis on the schools' policy-making capacity** (see below). Schools can purchase tools from universities and external private providers, based on the policy-making capacity characteristics and the Context, Input, Process and Output (CIPO) factors used in the inspection framework or similar quality indicators. Also, the OVSG network has created a self-evaluation tool based on the CIPO inspection framework, looking at quality and excellence, based on measuring policy-making capacity.

- The emergence in some schools of collegial visits to and from other schools. This is being stimulated, for example, by the Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) of some umbrella organisations, some city education departments and the University of Antwerp all of which have designed processes for schools to support each other in data gathering through collegial visits. For example, the City of Antwerp brings together schools involved in similar innovation projects to visit and peer review each other's schools (see below).

Use of self-evaluation

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, it is up to each school to decide how it will make use of self-evaluation results. The OECD review team encountered various examples of different uses of self-evaluation, including in relation to the school improvement cycle, leadership and teacher involvement, cross-school sharing of self-evaluation results, and relating self-evaluation to inspection.

Self-evaluation within cycles of improvement

Although it is up to the school to implement a planning system, the OECD review revealed a number of examples incorporating the use of self-evaluation within cycles of improvement, including:

- Schools using an annual planning process to identify priorities for the following year. For example, teachers feeding into the planning process and the school council, that includes teachers, parents, pupils and local community members, also would have an official advisory or consultative role in relation to the school's policy. Some schools use a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and may include other collected data in this process.
- Through the Flemish policy on equal opportunities, GOK (*Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleied*), set out in the Decree on Equal Education Opportunities (2002), schools with a large number of students from deprived backgrounds receive extra funding. Along with this comes the obligation to carry out a self analysis related to two of six related themes as part of a three-year quality cycle and planning process (see Figure 3.1). The GOK plan is part of the overall school plan, and care co-ordinators often play a lead role.
- Some external projects, for example the City of Antwerp's three-year innovation projects, start with an application form that incorporates self-evaluation, including of policy-making capacity criteria as well as planning, action and evaluation.

Leadership and teacher involvement

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, ensuring quality is the responsibility of school leaders and many choose to take the lead in self-evaluation. This may be shared with or delegated to a senior team or member of the senior team. For example, the OECD review visit to primary schools revealed one model where the principal does virtually all of the data summarising with limited administrative support, one model where the vice principal carries the main data role, and another where the principal and two senior colleagues make up the core team and share the tasks. The extent of school leader involvement in data management at secondary level depended more on the size of the school.

In addition to their input into planning cycles, teachers may be involved in school self-evaluation through their input in a range of meeting structures. As well as their participation in class committees that determine the success of students at the end of each year, teachers meet in different combinations to discuss assessment and evaluation issues. For example, the OECD review visit revealed the following approaches: a monthly cross-school meeting where teachers look at results calculated for each teacher and standardised by subject, plus an elected group of teachers who come together to discuss whole-school matters; regular meetings for teachers of the same subject to talk about the results for all of their students, checking these against attainment targets and making decisions about changing teaching methods as a result; using one of the pedagogic study days where the senior leadership team goes through the schools' results with teachers; discussion of results as they are available at weekly staff meetings, including looking back over previous year's results as comparison and, where available, comparing with contextually similar schools; "open conversations" twice a month, one of which is focused on a small area of the school and one that covers the whole school; and monthly staff meeting discussions of the whole school where class results are discussed and results from the external test used at the end of primary school are compared against those for other schools. It was clearer in some cases than in others to what extent these meetings led to concrete plans and actions to respond to issues identified in self-evaluation data.

Results sharing across schools

Test results are generally only made available to individual schools and it is up to them if they wish to share and compare their self-evaluation results with other schools.

Relating self-evaluation to inspection

The tensions between the purposes of self-evaluation and inspection are documented in the Country Background Report and elsewhere (MacBeath, 2006; Stoll and Fink, 1996). Given that for most schools, an inspection occurs infrequently, the inspection process does not have a strong influence on schools' self-evaluation processes, with the following exceptions. If a school has recently had or is shortly to have an inspection, school leaders and, sometimes, teachers become much more attuned to the sorts of questions that will be asked and external expectations that will be placed on them. Many more schools, however, draw on the knowledge that the networks, cities, communities, universities and other supporting bodies have of the inspection process and policy-making capacities. These bodies gear their support and guidance for all schools towards helping schools gather the kinds of data and use the sorts of evaluation processes that are likely to pick up the important improvement issues that must then be addressed through the cycle of improvement.

Competencies and capacity for school self-evaluation

School leaders' qualification requirements and rights to professional development

The Flemish Community of Belgium has no statutory description for the post of school leader. School boards are responsible for determining school leaders' responsibilities within subsidised public-sector education and subsidised private education. Within community education, however, the school leader's responsibilities and powers are laid down by law (Special Decree of 14 July 1998 regarding community

education – *Bijzonder decreet van 14 juli 1998 betreffende het gemeenschapsonderwijs*). Relevant to school self-evaluation among these powers are responsibility for the school's work plan, implementing reform projects, and a range of responsibilities related to their staff including determining areas of competence, drawing up job descriptions, support and assessment and determining in-service training needs. Regulations for selection of school leaders are laid down by decree. In community education, subsidised public-sector education and subsidised private education, as well as fulfilling recruitment conditions, a teaching qualification is required, as is a minimum "satisfactory" rating in the last evaluation or assessment.

National standards or required competencies for school leaders do not exist, although community education has a required set of competencies for its school leaders. In line with the concept of freedom of education, school boards determine school leaders' responsibilities, select and appoint school leaders and take responsibility for their further career development. A job description, used in subsequent evaluations includes a competency profile, describing necessary skills and other competencies. School boards are in no way obliged to adopt particular job descriptions or competency profiles, although models for these may be offered by educational networks or the Ministry of Education and Training.

Training and professional development for Flemish school leaders has increased recently. Two years of pre-service school leadership training is offered in community education, and parallel programmes are being developed for other potential Flemish school leaders. Newly-appointed school leaders, however, receive considerable support from education networks' co-ordinating bodies. The community education's in-service training centre for school leaders offers an in-service package, varied according to need, and subsidised education co-ordinating bodies offer training programmes. Co-ordinating bodies within education networks provide programmes, as do other bodies such as universities, higher education colleges, private training centres, etc.

Because of freedom of education, the government plays a limited role, although the Minister of Education and Training's policy declaration for 2009-2014 includes a statement that school boards and school leaders should have a vision related to educational quality and must be able to connect this to leadership and professional development. Flemish Community Education (GO!) and not-for-profit organisations of the umbrella organisations for publicly funded, publicly managed education (OVSG and POV) receive Flemish Community funding to run in-service training programmes related to their own educational aims. In addition, the Flemish Government publishes annual priority themes for funded in-service training projects. School leadership has been a priority theme in the past. In addition, the government recently introduced a training fund for school leaders to strengthen their professional competencies, entitling school leaders to 1 500 euros each, throughout their entire career, to support their training. This is supplemented by a small amount within schools' in-service training budget for school leaders.

Teachers' qualification requirements and rights to professional development

The common professional profile for teachers, updated by the Decision of the Flemish Government of 5 October 2007, is based on archetype functions described in the Decree of 1996 and includes ten basic competencies, referred to as functional units. These are sub-divided into three sets, one for nursery education, one for primary education and one for secondary education.

By decree, job descriptions for teachers are drawn up at the school level, taking into account the school's local context and needs, and have to be agreed with the trade unions. Some job descriptions relate to the school community as well as an individual school. Job descriptions form the basis of the teacher appraisal cycle, which is a four year process that includes continuous planning and improvement and a final formal evaluation interview. The main evaluator is usually the school principal or deputy principal.

Each year, primary schools are allocated one and a half pedagogical study days, and secondary schools are allocated one day. Decisions on their use are generally made by school leaders. These might be related to identified priorities on the school's plan or needs identified as a result of teacher appraisals and monitoring. If individual teachers would like to attend a course or some other development opportunity, they make a request – some schools have a formal written procedure – and this is assessed by school leaders. Teachers and schools can choose the content of their professional development so it is not clear to what extent teachers decide to improve assessment and evaluation methods through in-service training.

Strengths

Recognition of the importance of a school's policy-making capacity

A school's policy-making capacity is a key concept in school self-evaluation. Van Petegem and Vanhoof (2009) define this as “the extent to which schools use the available room for policy making to come to a continuous process of retaining or changing their work in order to improve their educational quality and attain both the external and self-imposed objectives”. The country background report produced for the OECD review states that “There is a strong belief that these capacities are “learnable” for individuals and for groups” and emphasises that, for a decade, researchers have stressed the need for schools to develop these capacities if they are “to fulfil their responsibilities in a meaningful way” (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).

Over recent years, policy-making capacity has become an increasingly important feature of school self-evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium. It has found its way into policy documents and is now embedded within the Resolution of the Decree on Quality in Education to be considered within the CIPO inspection framework (2010). Policy-making capacity is commonly understood to focus on eight organisational and individual factors, based on characteristics identified in research (Van Petegem *et al.*, 2006):

1. Willingness to reflect
2. Setting common goals
3. Creating involvement through participative leadership
4. Effective communication
5. Co-operation and mutual support
6. Consistency of initiatives
7. Responsiveness to internal and external expectations
8. Willingness to innovate

The concept of capacity is heavily endorsed in the literature on school and system improvement and change (Fullan, 2007; Levin, 2010), and also highlighted as critical in times of change to maintain the focus on learning (Stoll, 2009). 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. The OECD review team heard how instruments related to quality evaluation have been available for primary schools since the 1970s but how the focus has shifted in recent years from individual student to school evaluation. Although school self-evaluation instruments have only been available since the 1990s in secondary schools, there were several examples during the OECD review of secondary schools making use of quality and policy-making capacity surveys and processes.

Support for policy-making capacity development is also available. Members of the school leaders' associations described two-year pre-service competence-based training offered by umbrella organisations aimed at developing policy-making capacities, and one umbrella organisation's three-year in-service programme that also involves coaching. The University of Antwerp also provides in-service training for school principals and the OECD review team heard positive feedback on this. Providing support to schools in self-evaluation is vital to improvement and in the Flemish Community of Belgium there is a variety of support on offer to schools. Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) of the umbrella organisations are now offering support to schools in this area. For example, the PBD attached to Flemish Community Education (GO!) pre-service seminars and mentoring support is linked to its competencies which align fairly closely with the policy-making capacities.

Network support to promote and develop school self-evaluation capacity

Through the triangle of quality, professional support in school evaluation is provided by the umbrella organisations' Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD). Schools can access help for setting priorities. For example, the PBD for the umbrella organisation for municipal education (OVSG) has a quality circle at system level and schools will choose one or more priorities and ask for support. The PBD for the umbrella organisation for Catholic education providers (VSKO) also provides support to schools in improving quality, which has been a particular shift at the secondary level since the 2009 Decree, before which most of the support was subject-based. Similarly, the PBD advisors from the umbrella organisation for Provincial education (POV) often go into schools providing training for teams of teachers on student assessment. Support is also provided for collegial visits. The model for this differs across the different umbrella organisations. For example, VSKO draws on a model developed by English schools. POV's design involves visits between the school leader, care co-ordinator and teachers of three to five schools, and one aspect of these visits is school evaluation. During the three-day visit they collect a range of data. One activity is talking to pupils to ensure that they understand the process of evaluation. Evidence is analysed and then a report is written for the host school. Flemish Community Education (GO!) will be introducing the same model.

All of the umbrella organisations and some city education departments reported that they provide specific support for self-evaluation and use of data. Although several different terms were used (*e.g.*, “instrument of reflection”, “looking glass” and “showing them a mirror”), the intent was the same: to encourage and support schools to look at themselves through a range of lenses and help them benchmark their results and practice. Some organisations appear to provide more guidance on the kinds of and amount of data to collect. Others

suggest a basic minimum in terms of a test, suggesting that the schools use the results in conjunction with other data they choose to collect. The Universities of Leuven, Gent and Antwerp provide support as part of a project on using school performance feedback (Verhaeghe *et al.*, 2010), and support is also provided by a few cities. In particular, schools can obtain support if self-evaluation is related to equal opportunities programmes, *e.g.* schools may benefit from support to draw up their GOK action plan, but school leaders would generally appreciate further help, some noting to the OECD review team that they are unfamiliar with some self-evaluation terminology and processes. In addition, the OECD review team heard how the City of Antwerp offers parents support in helping them to understand their school so they can provide better feedback.

Other current foci of the umbrella organisations are relevant to school self-evaluation. These include all of them thinking about curriculum design and exploring what support will need to be provided to secondary schools for competence-based evaluation after the reform of secondary education; GO!’s thrust on trying to develop learning communities and encouraging teachers to base their enquiries on research; and VSKO looking at how to help schools track the impact of professional development activities.

Identified teacher competencies to support school evaluation

Teachers are well placed to play an active role in the school’s internal evaluation, given that four of the ten basic competencies of teachers laid out in the Order of the Flemish Government 2007 directly or indirectly connect with school self-evaluation:

- Teacher as facilitator of learning and development: through data collection, interpretation, evaluation and use;
- Teacher as an innovator – the teacher as researcher;
- Teacher as a member of a school: teachers are expected to collaborate, participate in discussion with colleagues and understand the culture of their school and its policy and organisation; and
- Teacher as external partner: through potential involvement in school communities that support each other’s school evaluation.

Cutting across these functional areas, 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. The attitudes expected of Flemish teachers are important to school self-evaluation. They align with the collective responsibility, collaboration, enquiry and development orientation that exemplify a “professional learning community”. That is, a community that is constantly exploring new and better ways to enhance the progress, development and performance of all pupils (Stoll *et al.*, 2006), and that embodies the “enquiry mindedness” that is necessary when using data for school improvement (Earl and Katz, 2002).

Within the basic competency “teacher as facilitator of learning and development” it is expected that teachers can systematically collect data and use it correctly to interpret and evaluate student progress and performance. The OECD review team heard how developing tests is part of the teacher education programme and networks provide teachers with practical support for test development, for example pedagogical advisors from the Provincial education network go into schools and provide training on teacher assessment of students for teams of teachers. International data from the PISA 2009

survey highlight the core role of teacher-developed tests in student assessments in Flemish secondary schools: 83% of students were in schools whose principal reported these were used at least once a month, compared to 62% on average in the OECD (see Annex E). During the OECD review, teachers in secondary schools described how they worked together within subject departments to develop and moderate tests and examinations, and primary teachers described the processes they went through to select tests and interpret the data for individual students. A number of the teachers the OECD review team spoke to talked confidently about using data for individual pupils to develop annual plans linked to attainment targets and develop internal examination questions linked to the attainment targets and developmental objectives. They were also very familiar with going on the school's intranet to look at individual student data in support of their planning.

Teachers can also be creative in assessing students' social competencies and wellbeing. During review visits to schools, the OECD team heard about a number of creative examples. For example, one primary school had developed a set of tools to determine strengths in social skills and wellbeing, including protocols for discussions in class, group work and games.

Another important competency for successful self-evaluation is "teacher as a member of a school". The OECD review team heard in several schools about positive relationships and collaboration between staff. For example, in one secondary school where teachers develop curriculum and tests with department colleagues, teachers thought that the strongest point in their school was the open culture.

Emerging collegial relations within and between schools to support competency development

According to reports from school principals during the PISA 2009 survey, 80% of the 15-year-olds assessed were in schools where there was teacher peer review of lesson plans, assessment instruments or lessons, as a way of monitoring teacher practices, compared to 57% on average across the OECD (see Annex E). During the OECD review, teachers in several schools spoke of the strength of their collaboration. Particularly notable was the case of a primary school team that had evolved over a period of years from being a group of isolated teachers to a cohesive group. The school principal had implemented a culture where each member of staff took responsibility for student results in the test administered in the final year of the school. Thus, the test was perceived as a diagnostic tool for the entire school and each teacher at all year levels contributes to students' results on that test.

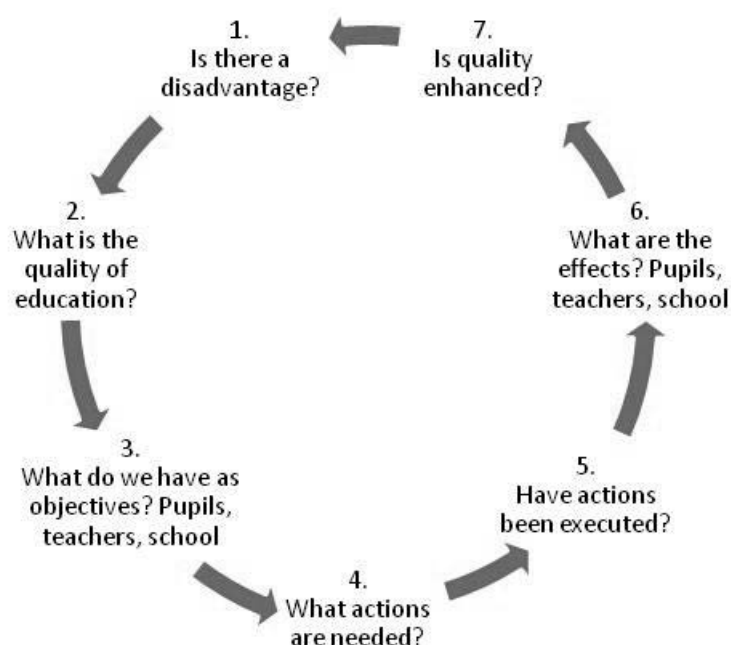
The OECD review team heard some examples of professional learning networks being promoted by either umbrella organisations or school communities. The umbrella organisation for Provincial education (POV) is piloting a peer visitation project. Before schools enter this project, they commit to a code of ethics within which the kind of trusting relationships necessary for deep networking can develop (Stoll *et al.*, 2011). The peer visitation is focused on quality assurance. The visiting team writes a report on findings, strengths, weaknesses and recommendations and the visited school decides how it will address the recommendations. At the individual school level, the OECD review visit revealed an example of a primary school principal collaborating with colleagues observing teachers in each other's schools and an inter-schools quality network between secondary school principals focusing on how to stimulate and improve use of outcomes. Finally, the City of Antwerp reported that it promotes the value of collaboration, for example, via the "Baobab" school project that focuses on co-operating with a range of partners.

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. Schools need external critical friends (Costa and Kallick, 1993; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005) and benefit from their input. Critical friends are trusted outsiders. Frequently, they are external advisors, but the benefit of colleagues in other schools playing this role is that they are fellow professionals who are equal. They have the potential to hone pedagogic peer evaluation skills and to create the impression that schools are no longer alone. However, paying attention to the challenges and facilitating conditions for professional learning networks is critical to their potential to enhance educational change and support improvement (Chapman and Hadfield, 2010).

Stimulating self-evaluation activities via the equal educational opportunities policy

The equal educational opportunities policy (GOK) presents an effective example of how school self-evaluation activities have been stimulated via central policy. Schools receiving extra funding as part of this policy are required to introduce a quality cycle and planning process (“the GOK quality cycle”). This quality cycle is similar to school development planning cycles in a number of European countries that are an important feature of school improvement (Creemers *et al.*, 2007). The OECD review revealed examples of schools using the planning cycle process as part of the equal educational opportunities policy (see Figure 3.1) more widely for other self-evaluation activities. For example, the school leader implements a strategy to ask teachers to reflect on student learning issues, then measure student performance, then consult pedagogical advisors, then draw up a plan of action and then evaluate this.

Figure 3.1 The quality cycle used in the equal educational opportunities policy (GOK)



A further benefit of GOK is the involvement of the care co-ordinator who, in many cases, plays a major role in collating and circulating data and supporting its use.

Considerable use of technology to support self-evaluation

The Flemish Inspectorate may periodically monitor the availability and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools (Eurydice, 2011), which acts as a stimulus for schools to use technology in general. The OECD review team gained the impression that considerable use is made of technology to support teachers and, in some schools, students in accessing a range of data. Schools visited during the OECD review used an electronic platform to organise and share their results. Teachers can look across the results and discuss these with each other. Some schools also supported students in analysing and reflecting on their own results. Indeed, it is worth noting that Eurydice (2011) lists the Flemish Community as one of seven European systems that have implemented the use of e-Portfolios for student assessment in primary and general secondary education, that is, an electronic collection of students' achievements allowing an assessment of their competencies. The OECD review team was also told about an online survey created by one of the secondary schools visited for students to evaluate their teachers and schooling, the results of which were also shared on the school's electronic platform. This school reportedly had a comprehensive information system in its electronic platform.

Technology is also used elsewhere. For example, the umbrella organisation for Catholic education (VSKO) puts up a series of papers on how to address issues raised in the results of its 6th grade test. The umbrella organisation for municipal education (OVSG) processes the results of its 6th grade test on line and communicates the results to schools electronically (see Chapter 2).

Students have a voice in school policy, including growing involvement of students in self-evaluation

Since 2004, secondary schools are required to have a student council and this is also the case for primary schools in which at least 10% of regular 11 to 13-year-olds demand this (see Chapter 2). This highlights the important role for student voice in school policy. During visits to three primary and three secondary schools, the OECD review team met confident, lively and articulate students, many of whom described ways in which their teachers and schools invited them to give feedback on different aspects of their experience. Each secondary school had some mechanism in place to collect student feedback. For example: a system whereby students evaluate teachers at the end of each year (in writing or via discussion depending on the age group) or individual teachers at the end of the year asking students for feedback on how they can improve their lessons; or student surveys (maybe on the school electronic platform) designed by teachers to collect feedback on various aspects of students' experience at school and their ideas on how to improve this or with a focus on particular topics, *e.g.* co-operation and thinking skills. Two of the primary schools had student discussion groups, including at the class level and with class representatives in school-level discussions. Further, the Student Organisation of Flanders (VSK) has developed a resource that could pave the way for further input from students into school self-evaluation (see Box 3.2).

During the OECD review students also described the many ways they were helped to understand their learning and progress, including: teachers checking throughout lessons; informal feedback from and conversations with teachers; report cards, also discussed with parents, and tutor reports focusing on attitudes; test results communicated to parents; or providing an overview of student performance information on the school's electronic platform and encouraging students to send messages to teachers about these and get feedback.

Box 3.2 Student developed teacher evaluation tools

The Student Organisation of Flanders (VSK) has developed an attractive and practical resource that its members are currently promoting to their schools. The report is playfully titled “Sh, the teacher learns! 25 ways to discover how students experience your lessons” and argues the case for student feedback, drawing on a feedback instrument developed by Van Petegem (2006).¹ In a set of instructions, teachers are encouraged to predict their strengths and weaknesses as teachers before gathering feedback from students. Then teachers prepare students and obtain their feedback, process the results (including comparing these to their own predictions), and feedback the results to students. The report highlights the point that “the plan of action is the teacher’s responsibility, but the students have a right to know what has been done with their comments”.

The report includes 25 fiches (charts) presenting a range of approaches to elicit student feedback on teaching. Examples include: “If I were a teacher” an exercise to solicit students’ expectations of their lessons; a timeline for students to identify crucial learning points; a system of “post-it” notes that students can use to compliment teaching and suggest areas for improvement; and “Student contact” which is a series of one-to-one conversations between a teacher and a student.

Note 1: Readers can find more information on the VSK’s website: www.vsknet.be/DeLeerkrachtLeert.

Challenges

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, schools face a number of challenges in their self-evaluation efforts. This section describes the weaknesses and concerns about the quality and effectiveness in current procedures, use of results, and competencies and capacity.

Lack of clarity around purpose of school self-evaluation and minimum quality

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, schools know they are the key agents in ensuring school quality, but there are differing definitions of what quality is and what it means to be a good or successful school. Through the Freedom of Education principle, each school is responsible for defining and conceptualising quality. Understanding of quality differs from school to school and, sometimes, even within a school. Other stakeholders also frequently have varying definitions. Without any reference standards, it is difficult to ensure reliable self-evaluation. Three issues are highlighted by this: a question around knowing whether the school adds value; the extent to which all schools are setting their sights for self-evaluation beyond achievement of minimum standards; and whether all schools consider the quality of teaching as part of school self-evaluation.

Schools that add value

Over more than 30 years a significant body of research has defined the characteristics of effective schools – schools where students make more progress than expected given social background factors and prior attainment (*e.g.* Creemers, 2007; Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000) and the processes of improvement that improve school effectiveness (*e.g.* Creemers *et al.*, 2007; Harris and Chrispeels, 2006). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, through longitudinal research such as the LOSO (*Longitudinaal Onderzoek Secundair Onderwijs*) project started in 1990 that followed over 6 400 students from ages 12 to 21, and the SiBO (*Schoolloopbanen in het Basisonderwijs*) project that started in 2002 and followed 6 000 children from the end of their nursery education throughout their primary schooling, it has also been possible to identify characteristics of more effective schooling in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Yet specific feedback on performance is only available to schools participating in these studies. Generally, without prior attainment data for specific children that can be tracked over time, it is difficult for schools to analyse their impact. This is more complicated in a country where there are limited common, national standardised performance measures available for samples of schools, meaning that schools will not receive regular feedback on student performance (only when schools are selected as part of the national assessment programme and this can be in different cognitive areas). Although all schools now have access to some measures which provide more contextualised understanding of students' performance (notably the Ministry of Education and Training's parallel tests), many schools do not choose to use these. For example, in 2010 only 49 schools chose to administer the Ministry of Education and Training's parallel tests (see Chapter 2).

High expectations

School effectiveness researchers internationally are in strong agreement about the importance of high expectations as a key characteristic of an effective school (*e.g.* Creemers, 2007; Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000). Attainment targets define minimum standards in the Flemish Community of Belgium. However, there are no central guidelines on different degrees of student proficiency beyond the minimum content they should master (see Chapter 2). The concern is that even when minimum standards are attained, this is not the same as pursuing excellence: minimum standards are necessary but insufficient.

Teaching as a feature of school quality

A considerable body of knowledge identifies teaching quality and teacher effectiveness to be at the heart of school effectiveness, improvement and system transformation. For example, state of the art research presented and discussed during the 24th meeting of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement in January 2011, highlighted the role of teacher effectiveness and professional learning in school and system improvement (see www.icsei.net/icsei2011/fullpapers). Flemish schools, within their definition of quality of education, have freedom to articulate their own pedagogic didactic approach. It is not clear, however, how self-evaluation incorporates this. The OECD review revealed that the schools visited had a significant amount of data on student tests, examinations, and some described school quality data. There was also feedback from students, some of which relates to teaching, but little evidence was presented of schools gathering evidence about the pedagogical process and considering its use for school self-evaluation, even though the diverse set of definitions of

a good school elicited from teachers included some that referred to lessons and relationships between teachers and students.

There does not appear to be a strong link between teacher appraisal and school self-evaluation. During the OECD review, school leaders emphasised the use of student data and quality data when asked about the kinds of evidence gathered in school self-evaluation. Some school leaders described appraisal processes and other ways in which they monitored or observed the quality of teaching, but this tended to be focused at the level of individual teachers rather than collating evidence to look at school level patterns within internal evaluation activity. Overall, international data indicate that comparatively high proportions of Flemish secondary school teachers report infrequent (less than once every two years) or no feedback on their work from school principals (43% compared to 31% on average internationally) and this is also the case regarding feedback from other teachers or members of the school management team (52% compared to 35% on average internationally, see Annex E).¹ Further, during the OECD review, concern was expressed by teacher union representatives that appraisal evaluators do not always have sufficient training and knowledge to get the best out of the process, that inadequate time is given to appraisal in some larger schools, and that it often does not focus significantly on improvement and development. Finally, the OECD review team heard little about peer observation (see also below).

Variation among school leaders in policy-making capacity

Among the schools visited during the OECD review, there were examples of highly successful schools where policy-making capacity has contributed significantly to their positive growth and impact. But the OECD review team formed the impression that there is variation between school leaders in policy-making capacities. Described by a number of witnesses to the OECD review team, this is also identified in inspection, although details are not spelt out unless a school receives a negative judgement. The school leader associations reported a need for more tools for school principals to help them manage their teams. Given that policy-making capacity is an important feature of self-improvement and that inspectors may not return for ten years, it is important that school leaders understand how to self-evaluate and develop their school's policy-making capacities. Related issues identified by the OECD review concern the strategic and consistent use of self-evaluation, leadership of learning communities, and time and internal leadership capacity.

Strategic and consistent use of self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is meant to be a systematic activity linked with decision making activity that informs a school's direction "within the framework of overall school development and policy" or aspects of it (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2011). 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. On average internationally, 45% of lower secondary school teachers reported that self-evaluation happens at least once per year, but this was reported by only 14% of lower secondary school teachers in the Flemish Community of Belgium (see Annex E). Rather, 64% of Flemish lower secondary school teachers reported that between one and four self-evaluations had happened over the past five-year period (compared to 34% on average internationally), indicating that self-evaluation practices in many schools may

well be linked to the inspection cycle (87% reported that one to four external evaluations had happened over the past five-year period).

Further, the OECD review team heard that the process of setting priorities is often reactive, rather than proactive, and can be *ad hoc*. Schools visited during the review generally reported that they analysed data when available and some had used data as problems arose, but data did not always feed into the schools' planning processes. Many school initiatives appeared problem-driven rather than strategically focused and strategies for improvement were not always articulated. Initiatives were also not always aligned, thus making it hard to analyse the relationship between them and how they fit into a bigger whole. Reports from school principals during the PISA 2009 survey indicate an underdeveloped culture in Flemish secondary schools for using student assessment data to monitor school progress: only 11% of Flemish students were in schools that compared the school to district or national performance (compared to 53% on average in the OECD); only 6% were in schools that compared the school with other schools (compared to 45% on average in the OECD); 50% were in schools that monitored the school's progress from year to year (compared to 76% on average in the OECD); and 60% were in schools that identified aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved (compared to 78% on average in the OECD, see Annex E). This impression was reinforced during the OECD review with reports that evaluation at one point in time is not always connected with previous evaluation and that some school principals do not read school performance feedback data reports before passing them on to teachers. Both points suggest a lack of strategic oversight of self-evaluation.

Notably, the OECD review team observed that data collection and analysis is sometimes not specifically linked to a school's plan or its professional development plan. During the OECD review, examples were shared of data collection and use in relation to the GOK cycle. This seemed, however, to be generally confined to the GOK policy, and while the GOK improvement plan is part of the overall school improvement plan, processes did not fit into an overall quality system. In particular, discussions with schools during the OECD review revealed the absence of systematic follow-up, revision and evaluation of impact of the results from self-evaluation.

Leading learning communities

Teacher involvement, ownership and opportunity for leadership varied across the schools visited during the OECD review. Where schools function as learning communities, self-evaluation and enquiry frequently begin to: "mature into an accepted, iterative process of data collection, analysis, reflection, and change" (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001). The OECD review visits to schools did not always highlight a sense of collective responsibility or collaborative evaluation culture. Although many teachers engage in considerable individual activity and there were examples of collaborative evaluation within some secondary school departments or year groups in primary schools, there appear to be missed opportunities for teachers to connect in peer and other joint evaluation activity. Indeed, in 2008 an internationally low proportion of Flemish secondary teachers reported that they had undertaken professional development activities in mentoring and peer observation (22% compared to an international average of 35%). Further, only 48% of those teachers reported that this had impacted their development as a teacher, in comparison to an international average of 78% (see Annex E). The OECD review team formed the impression that there is little stimulus for schools to see themselves as a whole. This rests on the school principal's capacity to bring the teaching team together.

The OECD review team also observed that professional development activity sometimes seems to bear little relation to issues raised in school self-evaluation, whereas research on effective professional development that leads to changes in practice and enhanced student outcomes suggests that enquiry, particularly through gathering data about student learning, progress and achievement, is a critical starting point for defining teachers' professional development needs (Timperley *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, the OECD review team formed the impression that many teachers have limited or no experience of “looking over the wall”, that is, sharing and engaging in peer evaluation and learning with and from colleagues in other schools. Although international evidence indicates that this is not widely practiced in many systems – on average internationally only 28% of lower secondary teachers reported that they had undertaken observation visits to other schools – peer observation visits seemed particularly underdeveloped in the Flemish Community of Belgium (only 15% of secondary teachers reported they had undertaken this) and compared to other countries surveyed, the proportion of Flemish teachers reporting that this had impacted their development as a teacher was the lowest (47% compared to an international average of 75%, see Annex E). Persuading teachers to work collaboratively with teachers in other schools on quality issues can be a challenge because of their autonomy.

Time and internal leadership capacity

School leaders need time for pedagogical leadership and quality assurance, especially as their involvement in and support for teachers' learning and development has a high impact on student learning outcomes (Robinson *et al.*, 2009). Teacher appraisal plays a central role in assuring the quality of teaching and learning within a school (see above). However, lower secondary teacher reports in 2008 indicate that they receive feedback on their work less often than teachers in other countries. Among those reporting that they received feedback at least twice per year: 22% reported receiving feedback from the school principal (compared to 41% on average internationally); and 34% reported receiving feedback from other teachers or members of the management team (compared to 49% on average internationally, see Annex E). During the OECD review visit, school leaders, especially in primary schools, reported being hampered in their policy-making capacities by a large number of administrative duties. School leaders reported that engaging in serious self-evaluation entails extremely high workload, although some shared this task with care co-ordinators. The OECD review team heard several stories of professionals collating self-evaluation data outside regular working hours. High turnover of school principals can also lead to inconsistency in self-evaluation approaches or, if the school principal has not shared the responsibility with others, a potential lack of succession planning around future leaders' self-evaluation knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. Indeed, international data from 2008 indicate that teacher appraisal responsibilities are not distributed in many schools: 42% of Flemish lower secondary school teachers reported that they never received feedback from other teachers or members of the school management team, compared to 29% on average internationally (see Annex E).

The OECD review team heard from individual school leaders and representatives of the school leader organisations that more middle managers are needed in order to take on responsibility in this area. Middle managers exist in secondary schools, but they have no formal power. From a freedom principle perspective colleagues saw this as being helpful, but it can mean that there is little incentive to pull together as a team and understand the

bigger picture of how a department is progressing and growing. In primary schools, the reported concerns related more to a lack of availability of staff with time to support self-evaluation.

School leaders also need support from their school boards. For example, compared with other countries, school boards have less direct influence on decision making regarding student assessment practices within the school (this was the case for 19% of Flemish students tested in PISA 2009, compared to 30% on average in the OECD, see Annex E). Discussions during the OECD review revealed that some school boards were more involved than others and some were also better able to provide support for self-evaluation.

A need to strengthen educators' evaluation literacy

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, a considerable number of teachers are not comfortable with testing. During the OECD review, teachers and school leaders communicated that they would appreciate further help both with this and with interpreting and using data, including use of school electronic platforms. Schildkamp *et al.* (2009) note in their study in the Netherlands on the effects of using a school self-evaluation instrument that most schools find it hard, both conceptually and practically, to use school self-evaluation results without support: "Improvement requires a solid analysis of underperformance, taking suitable measures to address these causes and, last but not least, the school-wide implementation of these measures". Through a school performance feedback project, "Each school its own mirror", Flemish research has also identified how receipt of feedback on its own is insufficient to foster internal evaluation and systematic reflection within a school (Verhaeghe *et al.*, 2010).

The OECD review team visits to schools identified that teachers and some school leaders struggled with data analysis and pulling together all of the student level data collected into a coherent whole. A lack of skills and confidence in using data for school development is not uncommon (Earl and Fullan, 2003; Williams and Coles, 2007). As more data and evidence become available to schools, the development of "enquiry-mindedness" in relation to analysis and use of student and other data appears to take time. Representatives from the PBD reported to the OECD review team that difficulties in interpreting data leads to some schools developing a bad self image – they think they are doing much worse than they actually are – and others having an over-inflated image, believing that they are doing much better than is the situation in reality.

Further, sometimes schools may not have all the necessary data they need. For example, the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse information is currently not available to schools, unless there is an inspection visit (see Chapters 2 and 4)². Even when schools have large amounts of data, sometimes they do not know how to aggregate it to look at the issues for the school as a whole. There was also little evidence during the OECD review visits of schools carrying out their own disaggregated analyses to identify issues for particular groups of students, for example looking at results for girls and boys or students from different ethnic backgrounds.

Teachers' orientation to research and enquiry

As “teacher as an innovator – the teacher as researcher”, Flemish teachers are expected to question and adjust their performance, take note of research results related to their practice and reflect on and adjust their practice from experience. Although the OECD review revealed that teachers were certainly interested in student assessment, for the most part, there did not appear to be a more general enquiry orientation. Little mention was made of research, of using research or carrying out action research. Although teachers learn action research methods in initial education, the Ministry of Education and Training has no way of checking if teachers possess all of the competencies at the end of their initial education and to what extent they apply these once they start teaching. Indeed, in 2008 only 32% of lower secondary teachers reported having undertaken professional development activities on individual and collaborative research (see Annex E). While this is a similar proportion compared to teachers in other countries (international average of 35%), comparatively fewer Flemish teachers reported that this had an impact on their development as a teacher (only 68% compared to an international average of 89%). This was the lowest proportion among the countries surveyed. Further, ongoing Flemish research into self-evaluation suggests that engaging in reflection and implementing self-evaluation processes is often still seen by teachers as “an obligation imposed from above, rather than as a necessary means of improving their own performance” (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2011, in press). Finally, teachers and other practitioners can be put off by research findings that are hard to interpret. Despite the development of attractive and accessible research summaries commissioned by the Flemish Education Council, it was not clear to the OECD review team that these were yet widely used by teachers (although teacher educators reported they used these).

Policy recommendations

As schools are the key actors in assuring quality since the Decree on Quality of Education (2009), it is critical that school leaders and teachers have the competencies to define and develop quality education and get the maximum impact out of school self-evaluation and inspection. On the basis of the analysis of strengths and challenges in Flemish school self-evaluation, the OECD review team proposes the following directions for policy development:

- Continue to embed self-evaluation requirements in new policies/programmes;
- Recognise the key role of school leaders in self-evaluation and strengthen their policy-making capacity;
- Promote the availability and use of appropriate self-evaluation resources;
- Increase teacher understanding of policy-making capacity;
- Extend collegial practice both within and among schools;
- Promote further involvement of students in self-evaluation activities.

Continue to embed self-evaluation requirements in new policies/programmes

The policy on equal educational opportunities (GOK) has proven to have stimulated self-evaluation activities in Flemish schools receiving extra resources. This is due to the requirement for schools to conduct a self-evaluation on a selection of centrally specified

themes and to embed this in a three-year quality circle and planning process. Similarly, the City of Antwerp requires schools to complete a self-evaluation when applying for funds in particular city-run projects or programmes. Such approaches stimulate a self-evaluation process in those schools concerned. In building on these positive initiatives, it will be important to highlight the need to link such self-evaluation activities in discrete areas to an overall quality assurance process in schools as part of strategic improvement plans. It would also aid schools, if the policy proposal includes clear guidelines on how to map any related evaluation processes to the CIPO inspection framework. This is another way to promote the understanding of the external evaluation model by schools (see also Chapter 4).

Strengthen school leaders' policy-making capacity

It is commonly acknowledged that self-evaluation without action is wasted time. Gathering evidence about the school's success and excellence should be part of "an active commitment to maintain, or further improve and share with others" (MacBeath, 2006). Data about a school's performance in a range of spheres can help reveal strengths and weaknesses in how a school functions and should contribute to the school improvement process by stimulating processes of reflection and self-evaluation (Verhaeghe *et al.*, 2010).

The vital role of school leaders is increasingly recognised across the world. The quality of school self-evaluation rests, to a large extent on the quality of school leaders and their ability to make the most of their policy-making capacity. To this end, the OECD review team suggests that the following policy options would help strengthen leadership for school self-evaluation: a Flemish framework of leadership competencies; developing new leadership roles; refinements to leadership training; a Ministry-funded project on competency development; and provision of appropriate and accessible resources.

Flemish framework of leadership competencies

The Flemish Community of Belgium already has a set of teacher competencies, and many countries are developing frameworks of leadership competencies or standards. The development of a common Flemish set of leadership competencies that highlight the importance of leadership and include reference to self-evaluation and policy-making competencies as part of the commitment to quality assurance would give greater status to self-evaluation. Such competencies, designed in partnership with significant input by school leaders and their associations would also provide insight for school boards to help guide their own leadership role.

Australia recently undertook an exercise to introduce national standards for school principals. Draft standards were published in February 2011 and were trialled through May 2011 for finalisation by mid-2011. The draft standards are aligned to a cyclical model of professional practice that meshes with self-evaluation, and five key professional practices that are research-based and oriented towards school improvement and innovation (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3 Developing national professional standards for school principals in Australia

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has developed national professional standards for school leaders in Australia. These were endorsed on 8 July 2011. While leadership requirements are common to all leaders there are five professional practices particular to the role of the school principal:

1. Leading teaching and learning
2. Developing self and others
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change
4. Leading the management of the school
5. Engaging and working with the community

The model of professional practice is cyclical. It involves the school principal, working collaboratively with others, planning and acting, reviewing and responding:

- **Plan and act:** assess and diagnose a given situation develop a plan, allocate resources and implement the plan consistent with the vision and values of the school.
- **Review:** collect and analyse data and make decisions
- **Respond:** consider how to consolidate the implementation or determine what to change or alter how decisions are made.

Source: www.aitsl.edu.au/school-leaders/national-professional-standard-for-principals/national-professional-standard-for-principals.html.

Box 3.4 provides an example of self-evaluation related competencies for school leaders in Ontario, Canada.

Box 3.4 Self-evaluation related competencies for school leaders in Ontario, Canada

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Ontario is a virtual organisation made up of a partnership of representatives from Ontario's principals' and district officers' associations, councils of school district directors, and the Ministry of Education. Its purpose is "to further develop education leadership so as to improve the level of student achievement in Ontario's four publicly-funded education systems. One of IEL's five practices and competencies within its research-based leadership framework for school principals and vice principals is "leading the instructional program", described as: "The principal sets high expectations for learning outcomes and monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction. The principal manages the school organisation effectively so that everyone can focus on teaching and learning." Among a number of practices outlined to achieve this are: ensuring a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on student achievement; using data to monitor progress; and developing professional learning communities in collaborative cultures. Associated skills include that the school principal is able to access, analyse, and interpret data, and initiate and support an enquiry-based approach to improvement in teaching and learning. Related knowledge includes knowledge of tools for data collection and analysis, school self-evaluation, strategies for developing effective teachers and project management for planning and implementing change.

Source: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/framework.

Develop new leadership roles

The Flemish policy-making capacity indicators suggest that participative leadership is a necessary ingredient. This is well endorsed in the international literature on distributed leadership (e.g. Spillane, 2006). In this spirit, it is suggested that it would take some pressure off school principals if there was an evaluation co-ordinator in each school. This might not be a full-time role, but this person would need to be given the status and have time to carry out this role. Activities might include to create an evaluation plan with the school principal, advise on and seek out self-evaluation instruments, oversee their use, collate the data, carry out initial analysis and facilitate their colleagues in interpreting and using the data. They could also lead in the promotion and co-ordination of teacher research (see below). If this role is to have any status, it would need to be at a senior level, as part of the core team and working closely with the school principal who would continue to oversee the evaluation as part of the school's development. This would require financial investment to remunerate the co-ordinator or provide for their release time to signal the importance of the role. To support this, there might be an expansion of the levels of teacher competency to include a third level – that of expert or excellent teacher – with specific expectations around supporting peers with assessment, evaluation and research and innovation.

Having one or more members of staff with specific responsibility for evaluation is an important statement. While it is uncommon in European countries to have a specific person within schools assigned to a role of co-ordinating such activity, many local authorities (*Kommune*) in Sweden and Norway have such co-ordinators although these are not mandatory. Also, some schools in the Netherlands have a quality care manager/data expert (Schildkamp and Kuiper, 2010). This person usually has some evaluation expertise, works at the school board level and is responsible for many schools and has many different tasks (administrative, preparing for inspection visit, policy plans etc). This often means that this person helps administer self-evaluation and writes a report, but does not have time to work with schools on using the report. In contrast, many English schools have a specific data manager, who is often a member of the school leadership team, although when the external inspection agency, Ofsted, introduced the self-evaluation form (no longer compulsory), schools started to distribute self-evaluation activities more evenly throughout their senior leadership teams, with the school leader overseeing self-evaluation.

Refine leadership training

A study in 2004 by the European Standing International Conference on Inspection (SICI) found that “self-evaluation is most effective in countries that have the strongest external support to the process and thus have created a culture and climate for effective school self-evaluation” (MacBeath, 2010). To start as a new school principal and have a major responsibility for a school's quality assurance is a significant challenge for a teacher. They need professional development support before they take up their role and there also needs to be in-service training available on an ongoing basis. For example, in Sweden school self-evaluation has been a major component of national school leader education since 1976.

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the foundations for this are already in place, but it would be considerably aided by further collaboration between providers (Pedagogical Advisory Services, city education departments, community leaders and university researchers) to come up with comprehensive offerings that can be made

available to all school leaders, not just those who happen to be affiliated to a particular network or live in a certain city. Such leadership training should provide input on research-based definitions of quality, indicators of school effectiveness, teacher effectiveness and professional learning communities; examples of successful school leaders sharing experiences of policy-making capacity that makes a difference for students; and access to and opportunities to practise using, analysing and interpreting different kinds of data (qualitative and quantitative). Leadership training should be made available for school evaluation co-ordinators and evaluation training opportunities could also be offered to core teams and senior leadership teams to promote collective learning and mutual support.

Ministry of Education and Training project on competency development

The Ministry of Education and Training translates its operational objectives into annual policy projects. A possible option would be to fund a project around the area of school evaluation competencies, identifying with stakeholders the specific evaluation and enquiry competencies related to effective pedagogy and school quality that need developing, and designing and supporting related competency development. Such a project would be a signal of the high priority of self-evaluation. Potential providers could also be encouraged to bid in partnership to promote greater collaboration across the system, and ensuring greater sharing of evaluation expertise.

Promote the availability and use of appropriate self-evaluation resources

The OECD review team sees room for the Ministry of Education and Training to more effectively promote the effective use of available self-evaluation tools by schools. This could draw on two major elements: an overview of current tools available via the Ministry of Education and Training, universities and the various networks and a comparison of what each of these tools measures and offers (see Chapter 2); the promotion of examples of where schools are working effectively with self-evaluation tools.

Access to consistent, comparable, reliable and broad-based self-evaluation tools and examples of effective use of these in school policy making would give school leaders a better picture of what school self-evaluation looks like when it is working well (see for example Box 3.5).

The OECD review team recommends giving schools access to high quality data that enables schools to explore their strengths, weaknesses, and progress over time for all pupils as well as for different groups as an important way to identify areas for development. In this light, the OECD review team supports the proposal to give schools access to existing information in the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse. A second step would be to assess to what extent there is demand for reliable tools that go beyond assessing those cognitive aspects of students' learning that are easier to assess, but also students' higher-order thinking skills and non-cognitive aspects such as students' attitudes and learning strategies.

Box 3.5 Self-evaluation tools for school improvement

In both Norway and Scotland, schools are required to conduct self-evaluations on an annual basis (OECD, 2011). In both systems, centrally developed self-evaluation tools are offered to schools. In addition to recently developed tools to help schools review their teaching practice and organisation, Norway prioritises the evaluation of a broad set of student outcomes and runs a compulsory Pupil Survey at three different stages of schooling (although schools are free to add specific elements to the survey) (Nusche *et al.*, 2011). An evaluation of how this is used revealed that the vast majority of school principals and teachers follow up on the results of these as part of their school improvement process (Allerup *et al.*, 2009, in Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2011). In Scotland, the self-evaluation support includes a set of quality indicators built on the inspection criteria and, importantly, a guide for improvement planning in schools. All this information is available on the Scottish education inspectorate's website: www.hmie.gov.uk/generic/journeytoexcellence.

In China, the Hong Kong Education Bureau provides school self-improvement resources, including a school self-improvement cycle and tools, processes and performance measures (cognitive and affective) for schools to assess strengths and weaknesses. This formative support is coupled with extensive professional development for senior leaders, teachers and for inspection teams. For further information see: www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=6424&langno=1; www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=6419&langno=1.

Increase teachers' understanding of policy-making capacity

The OECD review team sees considerable scope to expand the opportunities for teachers to develop their policy-making capacity in initial teacher education, in-service training and within schools.

Strengthening links between teaching quality and self-evaluation

Links between school self-evaluation and the pedagogical process need to be strengthened. There are several ways in which this might occur. Job descriptions could be adapted to include appropriate aspects of school self-evaluation in line with the teacher competence related to being a member of the school team. This would widen the focus of teacher appraisal. In addition, finding ways to collate appraisal data within schools and connect this both to self-evaluation and the school's professional development plan would bring a greater sense of coherence to the process and increase the connection for teachers.

Building competencies in data use, research and innovation

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 umbrella organisations' Pedagogical Advisory Services, drawing on each other's experience and expertise would help provide a more coherent and consistent offer. Universities should also be well placed to support

networks and city departments in developing data literacy training and action research. There is a tension in universities around the world between what is usually considered to be their core work (research, publishing and teaching) and this kind of applied work which often has low status. However, researchers understand research methods and data use in a way that many other stakeholders do not: they have been trained to do so, and there are researchers in many countries who believe strongly in the value of supporting teachers and school leaders in becoming better at self-evaluation activities. In England recently, greater incentives have been given to researchers to consider how their work can have greater impact. Perhaps incentives might be provided to researchers through grants for particular initiatives.

Accreditation might be considered, if this would be attractive, and this might be a further incentive for universities if this could be tied to entry to higher degrees. In England, the Teacher Learning Academy (TLA) draws on principles of effective collaborative professional development³. Teachers engage with the knowledge base to identify learning needs, plan their learning and carry out their plan, with coaching and mentoring support. They also evaluate their learning and its impact and commit to sharing it with others and finding ways to influence others' practice. Whole schools frequently join the TLA as part of a school-wide commitment to enquiry-based development. The TLA also provides research summaries, resources and access to other teachers' research (for further information see: www.tla.ac.uk).

Funding for collaborative research

A centralised funding grant to promote collaborative teacher research projects, supported by universities, would also signal the value of ongoing enquiry. For example, South Korea funds action research by teachers. Districts make grants available to schools that lead their own research projects – each school can select a research topic, conduct research, publish the results and invite teachers from other schools to peer-review their findings. This depends on further development of teachers' competence during their initial education and once they are teaching (see previous point). Teacher research does not need to be judged by the same standards as academic research but teachers need clear guidance and support in how to carry out, write up and judge the quality of their and colleagues' research.

Extend collegial practice both within and among schools

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the OECD review team sees strong potential in extending collegial practice both within and among schools. Initially, there can be concerns about competition, but experience in England has demonstrated that the more opportunities teachers and school leaders are given to observe what is happening in other schools, the more they realise how helpful this is to their practice, despite competition. Frequently, collaboration is encouraged by incentivisation – for example funded projects or including extent of collaborative work within inspection systems as has been done within the English Ofsted inspection system, and might be included as a feature of policy-making capacity in the Flemish inspection system. Seeking external ideas and support, including from other schools, is a feature of effective professional learning communities (Bolam *et al.*, 2005), and the most successful education systems that sustain improvement – those in the process of moving from being great to being excellent – are characterised by significant amounts of peer collaboration (Mourshed *et al.*, 2010). Further, there is considerable evidence, for example from England, Finland and Sweden, that school-

school partnerships, clusters and networks can provide mechanisms for sharing effective leadership as well as effective practice in a way that contributes to raising the performance of the member schools (Pont *et al.*, 2008). In England, executive leadership across partner schools has proven to be a very effective mechanism for raising the performance of underachieving schools (Hill and Matthews, 2010).

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. The OECD review team visits identified teachers that would be interested in greater collaborative enquiry activity.

Leadership standards in a number of countries also now highlight the importance of networking and partnerships between schools. Communities of schools already exist in the Flemish system and some promote sharing of self-evaluation data among their schools. Some school principals in communities review aspects of each other's schools by request of their peers. The OECD review team was informed that the Provincial network, the City of Antwerp and the University of Antwerp have developed projects and other initiatives focused on collegial visits. For example, the City of Antwerp supports and encourages schools involved in its innovation projects to share the good practice they identify through self-evaluation. Such activity would benefit from further development and co-ordination to create a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts. Although described in the Country Background Report as a form of external inspection, a particular power of learning networks between schools is the sense of moral purpose around making a difference for all children – learning on behalf of others as well as with and from others – as was the case in the Networked Learning Communities programme, a large-scale enquiry and development initiative involving 137 networks (1 500 schools) in England between 2002 and 2006 (Jackson and Temperley, 2007). In the Flemish Community of Belgium, to engage in further development would mean school boards representing communities, Pedagogical Advisory Services, city education departments and universities working together in order to understand and define examples of good practice in this area. Box 3.6 contains examples of collaborative practice within and between 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.

Box 3.6 Examples of professional learning communities

Network of Performance Based Schools, British Columbia, Canada

The Network of Performance Based Schools in British Columbia, Canada has evolved over 12 years to include 400 geographically dispersed schools. With support of key provincial and district leaders, the networked learning community has focused on developing greater learner control and engagement; learning-focused forms of assessment practice; enquiry and curiosity as drivers of change; collaboration, community and generosity as norms of networked behaviour; and a dual focus on quality and equity.

Network schools have the ambitious challenge of ensuring that every learner succeeds – with the goal of a 100 percent completion by 2017. Schools are committed to working together to identify, create and apply powerful learning and teaching practices, and to design innovative learning environments that work for all learners, especially for those who are most vulnerable. The network educators use a recursive enquiry cycle to explore greater learner self-regulation and coaching forms of assessment practice. They focus on one or more significant learning areas – assessment practices, non-fiction and fiction writing and reading, mathematical problem-solving, social responsibility/citizenship, science, healthy living, or Aboriginal understandings – all of which involve critical thinking and learner engagement. Key to the focus on learner ownership is the consistent use of content area progressions developed and refined by British Columbia educators.

As the network has matured, distributed forms of network leadership have evolved, with individuals contributing voluntarily as local and regional leaders. This cadre of 50 key educators has become a strong and respected force for change in their respective regions.

The Ealing Professional Learning Community, London, England

The Ealing Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an initiative established by a partnership between a school and the local authority in 2008. Now involving all 13 secondary schools and all five special schools, the PLC aims to develop collegial approaches to developing students' personal learning and thinking skills, using collaborative enquiry approaches that generate new knowledge and ideas oriented towards improving the culture for learning, teaching practice and students' learning across all the schools. The learning review is the central feature. Every school hosts a learning review where up to 12 colleagues from the host school, lead schools, other schools and the local authority spend three quarters of a day in the host school. Focusing on an enquiry question chosen by the host school, pairs of colleagues review practice, using observations, interviews, and examination of documents, and data, discussing these as they go along. This is followed by a facilitated whole group summary discussion and then feedback to the host school's principal.

In-school teacher learning initiative, Latvia

In Latvia, a leading school has set up a “pedagogical lab” in which teachers develop lessons, record them on video, share them with peers, and discuss them. Each teacher is required to develop and share a minimum of three to four demonstration lessons per year. Teachers from other schools are invited to participate because the commitment to improving teaching practice is understood as a general commitment to the profession, not just to the school.

Source: www.npbs.ca; Stoll et al. (2011); and Mourshed et al. (2010).

Promote further involvement of students in self-evaluation activities

Students have important feedback to give to their schools. The Flemish government is keen to develop a system where students can give feedback to their teachers. Evidence from several countries has highlighted that involving students in decisions about their schooling is an important factor in school improvement. It is not just a human right to seek students' feedback; they should not just be passive recipients or consumers of what schools offer them and teachers "teach". Students have a critical role to play in determining how schools and classrooms can be improved (Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2007; MacBeath *et al.*, 2000), even though they need support to learn how to provide powerful feedback (Pekrul and Levin, 2007).

The OECD review visit highlighted that students do have a voice in school policy, through student councils and other mechanisms. There is potential for even greater involvement. In a number of systems around the world, students in some schools are involved in deep evaluation. For example, in the Learning School project, students from eight countries – Germany, the Czech Republic, Japan, Hong Kong-China, Korea, South Africa, Scotland and Sweden – visited each other's schools, evaluating their practice (MacBeath and Sugimine, 2003). Students in several English schools observe teachers and provide feedback, according to strict protocols. Others, there and elsewhere, carry out research (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2007). The development and promotion of the Student Organisation of Flanders' (VSK) resource highlights the positive and energetic role students can play in ensuring the high quality of their schools. Students' input should be further encouraged in finding creative ways they can help their schools self-evaluate.

Notes

1. These and other international results in this chapter are from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted in 2007/08. Results are based on self-reports from teachers and school principals in secondary schools. All data quoted from TALIS are presented in Annex E.
2. It is of note that there is a new policy to provide schools with access to this information, which should be introduced by the end 2011/early 2012.
3. Note that as part of the Government's plan to close the General Teaching Council, the Teacher Learning Academy reopened under new management on 29 November 2011 (see: www.tla.ac.uk).

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Chapter 4

School inspections

This chapter gives an overview of the major features of school inspections or external school evaluations in the Flemish Community of Belgium, including: different procedures currently used, such as the new differentiated inspection approach, the inspection framework and categories of official recommendations the Inspectorate can make; how inspection results are used by schools, the public and for research; and the competencies and capacity for school inspections, considering how the Inspectorate is organised, recruitment of inspectors and their professional development. It then analyses the current strengths and challenges to school inspections in the Flemish Community of Belgium and recommends some areas for further policy development.

This chapter analyses approaches to the external evaluation of schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium by the Flemish Inspectorate of Education. It describes the context and features for school inspections, detailing procedures, use of inspection results and competencies for inspectors.

Context and features

Introduction

The external evaluation of schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium is provided by the Flemish Inspectorate of Education. The tasks of the Inspectorate are to check whether the schools comply with the regulations for recognition and financing or subsidising, whether the schools comply with the regulations concerning school-specific policy and whether the schools systematically monitor their own quality. Part of the inspection consists of examining the tests schools use to assess their pupils. This section sketches out the methodology employed, the aspects that are assessed, the instruments used, the standards for quality, the competencies involved in inspection and the use of inspection reports.

Procedures for school inspections

A new differentiated approach

2009 saw the introduction of a new inspection approach. Since 1991 school inspections have been holistic, targeting the whole school.¹ The new inspection approach is also holistic, but complements this with a “differentiated approach” in terms of the intensity and periodicity of inspections. This means that the Inspectorate selects a limited focus of investigation at each school, depending on the school’s profile which is investigated in the first stage of the inspection cycle. In this way, the Inspectorate proportionally devotes time to schools that need it most, on the basis of their educational quality.

Until 2009, the Inspectorate performed a comprehensive inspection of the entire school, once every six or seven years. Now, each school has to be inspected at least once every ten years, but some schools will be inspected more frequently and more extensively than others within this period, depending on the Inspectorate’s assessment of their educational quality. Developments in school quality management meant that the adoption of this new differentiated approach was a logical change.

The inspection framework to assess context, input, process and output

The starting point for each school inspection is the control of how well the curriculum is implemented, pupil attainment levels, the pursuit of developmental goals for pupils, and the cross-curricular attainment levels. The next stage is for inspectors to control the school’s compliance with regulations, as well as the school’s curriculum and operational plans.

To investigate this, the Inspectorate has a framework which covers context, input, process and output factors (the CIPO inspection framework). Some of these factors concern regulations, others are quality aspects (see Table 4.1). Its aim is to cover all relevant aspects that foster output of education. The focus of external inspection is output based and examines outputs in four major areas (see Box 4.1).

Table 4.1 The CIPO inspection framework

CONTEXT				
Identification	Situational location	History	Regulatory framework	
INPUT				
Personnel characteristics		Student characteristics		
PROCESS			OUTPUT	
GENERAL	PERSONNEL	EDUCATIONAL POLICY	STUDENT PERFORMANCE	OUTCOMES
Leadership	Staff management	Curriculum Coaching and counselling Evaluation	Developmental objectives	Subsequent education
Development of school vision	Professional development		Attainment targets	Job market
Decision making	LOGISTICS		SCHOOL CAREERS	SATISFACTION
Processes and procedures	Infrastructure and equipment		Progress Enrolment	Staff Students
Quality assurance	Well-being			Partners

Box 4.1 A focus on output within the Inspection Framework

The Inspectorate uses the Context, Input, Process and Output (CIPO) Inspection Framework, which defines the areas that inspectors will examine. However, the output created by a school is the basis for inspectors to make a positive, restricted positive or negative recommendation about the school (or a component of the school). Context, input and process are underlying components that provide information on how the output was achieved. In particular, the basis for distinguishing between a negative recommendation and a restricted positive recommendation is the inspectors' judgement on the extent to which the school manages to develop and monitor efficient processes relying on the school-specific context and input variables in order to increase the results on the output indicators.

Regarding output, the Inspectorate examines evidence and information in the following four major areas:

- **Learning results:** results where schools have performance obligations (attainment targets) and where schools have exertion obligations (developmental objectives, cross-curricular attainment targets)
- **School career:** information on how the school monitors the progress of pupils, and how they assure that pupils attend school
- **Outcome:** evidence of students' subsequent educational pathway and their results in that pathway and students' flow into the labour market and their career choice
- **Satisfaction:** evidence on the satisfaction of pupils, teachers and school co-operation partners

Source: OECD review.

Since the implementation of the differentiated approach in 2009, the Inspectorate uses the way a school devises its context, input and process factors as more or less deliberate choices to foster the output factors. So, context, input and processes, especially staff policy, education policy and evaluation policy, are seen as directly instrumental to achieving outputs. The policy-making capacity of a school consists of the ability to develop efficient processes taking account of its context and input and to take

responsibility for it. This means also, that the Inspectorate will not make explicit judgements on the “policy-making capacities” of schools, in the sense that this is measured, scored and described explicitly. It functions more as a weight in the deliberation on the quality of the output and quality of the school’s efforts to foster output and influences the recommendation chosen (see below).

With the current inspection approach, the investigation into policy-making capacity is in a way intertwined with inspecting the compliance of a school with regulations: if a school complies with the regulatory requirements and its school-specific policy, it in fact expresses its policy-making capacities.

Stages of external evaluation

The Inspectorate divides the year into two semesters (September-December and January-June) and publishes the scheme for site visits for the next semester. At least two to three months in advance, a school is notified of the inspection to come. The school is then also notified of the stages and content of inspection. Also, in each semester, meetings are arranged to discuss the content of the investigation with schools in advance (see below). The stages of inspection are:

1. The preliminary investigation: The exact date is announced 14 days before the actual visit. It takes place on one day and is performed by a team of one inspector and one “dossier manager”.
2. The actual inspection: The exact date and agenda are announced one week before the actual visit. It takes place over a three to five-day period and is performed by a team of two to six inspectors. At the end of the visit there is a debriefing to the school administration.
3. The inspection report publication, with recommendations to the Flemish government: within two months after the inspection the report is discussed at a verification meeting with the school administration and finalised within one month after this meeting.

At the end of the preliminary investigation, the focus of actual inspection is determined on the basis of the school’s profile, emerging from: a) a number of objective quality aspects and documents provided by the school; b) previous inspection reports; c) in the event of serious complaints, an additional inspection may be requested by the Flemish government or by the Minister of Education and Training. In essence, data on outcome, and some context and input variables are considered during this phase.

All data from the preliminary investigation are interpreted in terms of estimated strengths and weaknesses with respect to learning domains and the CIPO-components (see above). This results in an integrated quality picture. Then, a deliberation takes place to decide upon the inspection focus: directly proportional to the strengths and weaknesses, but also balancing them, some learning domains (attainment targets and level of student performance) and some CIPO-process variables are chosen to be investigated in more detail.

During the actual inspection, process aspects, such as the examinations and the system of self-evaluation are investigated. The focus is determined separately in each school, relying on the issues in schools that could serve as a lever for further school improvement and on the objective data in which the school discerns itself from other comparable schools in either a positive or negative manner (see above). Also, the

investigation can be complemented by an additional investigation into an area required by current policy. So, the actual inspection is not restricted to an inspection of only the weak features that were identified during the preliminary phase.

Judgement after inspection

The inspection report contains a recommendation to the Flemish government about the steps to be taken after the quality of a school has been judged. There are three possible recommendations (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Possible recommendations by the Flemish Inspectorate

	Judgement	Recognition	What does the Inspectorate do?
Positive recommendation	The institution has sufficient quality and is strong enough to monitor and improve its quality.	The institution remains recognised.	There is no follow-up audit. The Inspectorate only goes back to the institution in a future inspection round.
Restricted positive recommendation, within a defined deadline	The institution must eliminate specified deficits within an imposed deadline.	The institution remains provisionally recognised.	During the follow-up inspection visit, the Inspectorate checks whether the specified deficits have been eliminated. If this is the case, the institution receives a positive recommendation. If not, the institution receives a negative recommendation.
Negative recommendation	The institution must eliminate serious deficits. The Inspectorate advises whether the institution may do this independently or needs external support.	The procedure for revoking recognition starts. This procedure is suspended for a minimum of one school year and a maximum of 3 school years if the institution submits an approved improvement plan. The institution has two months to submit an improvement plan.	If the institution: - does not submit an improvement plan within three months after the deadline for submission has expired, then a new inspection team inspects the institution; - submits an improvement plan, but it is not approved, within three months a new inspection team inspects the institution; - submits an approved improvement plan, a new inspection team inspects the institution within three months after the agreed suspension period (1-3 years). This re-audit results in a positive recommendation, a restricted positive recommendation or a recommendation to permanently revoke recognition.

Source: Vlaamse overheid, 2011.

Any shortcomings regarding the school's quality are stipulated in the inspection report. The shortcomings are always in terms of output or regulations, never in terms of processes (Verbauwhede, 2011). On the basis of identified shortcomings, development-oriented recommendations are formulated. Schools that received a "restricted positive recommendation, within a defined deadline" or a "negative recommendation" have the duty to improve their quality. If the Inspectorate judges that a school with a "negative recommendation" needs assistance to improve (see Table 4.2), the use of external support is obligatory and most often provided by the Pedagogical Advisory Service (PBD) of the umbrella organisation the school belongs to. Also, arrangements are made to set a

deadline for improvement. Schools that receive a “restricted positive recommendation, within a defined deadline” will be visited after the convened time period, to investigate whether the detected shortcomings have been improved.

At schools that receive a “positive recommendation” without restrictions, the Inspectorate has judged that the school is able to develop its quality further without assistance and no follow-up inspection is planned. So in this way, the school’s policy-making capacities play a role (see Chapter 3).

Compliance with regulations and quality of education

The Inspectorate checks the compliance of a school with current regulations, and also evaluates school quality. However, depending on the type of regulation, they are addressed in a separate procedure. The level of three aspects of well-being: habitability, safety and hygiene of the school buildings and compound, is estimated by the preliminary team on the basis of school documents. The preliminary estimation determines the priority of the next step, the full control of these aspects. If no priority, the control will be planned at a time which is most economical seen from a logistic perspective (*e.g.* together with other schools in the same community or region). The control visit takes at least one day and is notified at least 14 days in advance.

The other regulations concern administrative matters, whether the curriculum covers the attainment targets, whether the school systematically monitors its quality and how the school conforms to its own, school-specific regulations. The latter regard equal educational opportunities, support and guidance, professional development of staff, stakeholder participation, etc. These kinds of regulatory aspects are controlled parallel to the investigation of educational quality.

Role of information systems in external school evaluation

During the preliminary investigation the Inspectorate uses data from the Data Warehouse system provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (see Chapter 2). This Data Warehouse system contains data that schools have submitted in order to gain their income. The data include numbers of students, student retention, students from deprived background and changes in personnel staff turnover. The Inspectorate uses these data to construct an individual school profile with relevant educational indicators linked to the quality of education. This individual school profile contains indicators concerning output (school career and graduation data), input (number of students within the educational programmes, student retention, educational career, background characteristics like the socio-economic background of students, changes in personnel) and context (infrastructure, location, recruitment). It also contains the development of these indicators over the last six years. Each school is also positioned against a group of comparable schools (there are 175 reference groups, based on region, educational level and type of study). Each indicator of the school profile is benchmarked against the mean of the reference group and supports the Inspectorate to decide upon the focus of inspection. These school profile reports also aim to support schools in reflecting upon their quality and preparing their self-evaluations. Schools appreciate that they are not ranked on the basis of these data.

During the actual inspection, to assess the context, input and process factors, the investigation draws most heavily on document analyses, interviews with teachers, pupils and school management, as well as classroom observations. The school profile reports

that were used in the preliminary phase are also used. To assess outputs, the Inspectorate checks whether the school has a student evaluation policy that allows the school to monitor whether the students have achieved the attainment targets. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, different tools are available to schools to assess student learning outcomes and progress, student attendance and students' further education or career pathways, but the quality of these tools differs and there are in general less tools available for secondary schools (see Chapter 2 for an overview). However, the extent and usage of student evaluation very much depends on the school. Inspectors will look to the use of student tests to investigate a school's evaluation capacity. Similarly, the Inspectorate is reliant on whether or not schools have tools to measure student and parent satisfaction.

Competencies and capacity for inspection

In 2009, there were some 145 inspectors available.² The former strict distinction between the five corps (working for the five educational sectors) and their inspectors has been abandoned. The Inspectorate now consists of only one, uniform corps of inspectors which can be deployed to inspect different educational levels. To work efficiently, inspectors are organised into different programmes with responsibilities for either quality controls, internal support or internal and external communication roles.

The last recruitment round to the Inspectorate was in March 2011. An important requirement for applicants is that they recently had a job in education for at least eight years, as a member of a school or pupil guidance centre. After the first check on “irreproachable conduct”, applicants take two tests (in written and oral form) to assess their thinking skills, assertiveness, communication skills, team spirit, flexibility and organisational skills. The training after appointment is a personal learning path.

New Inspectorate members need to attend a professional development programme for one full year. The in-service training for members of the Inspectorate consists of collective and individual initiatives. Collective training can include either general conferences to explore and/or explain specific themes, or meetings offering training on particular job aspects. Examples of individual initiatives include invitations for inspectors to attend certain in-service events or specific training requests made by inspectors.

With the implementation of the differentiated approach to inspection, all inspectors received related training (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010, p81).

Use of inspection results

Use by schools for improvement

Inspection reports include recommendations for school improvement. Schools, therefore, are the primary users of the inspection results. Of course, the Ministry of Education and Training also uses the results to consider the further recognition of schools to receive funding. Only if, in case of a negative recommendation, after a follow-up inspection the quality has not improved, the Inspectorate can advise the Minister for Education and Training to close the school or take other sanctions. In the past, a negative recommendation automatically led to sanctions. Negative recommendations are rare occurrences: there were only two primary schools that received a negative recommendation in the entire second inspection round from 2000 to 2008 (Vlaamse

overheid, 2010). However, representatives from the Inspectorate informed the OECD review team that they expect negative recommendations to increase in the future, because of the expected increase in confidence in the improvement function of this recommendation.

Use by the public

At the earliest 30 days after sending the definitive report to the school (that is, at least three months after the inspection), the report is published on the Inspectorate's website. This practice started in 2007. Inspection reports have a separate parent summary. The 2009 education law (art. 42 § 2) also requires that pupils and their parents are the first to be informed about the results of an inspection, before the reports become public.

Use by research

The CIPO framework is still being intensively researched by Flemish universities, to improve education and to improve feedback given to schools. Schools can also receive feedback on some of their CIPO-factors (school feedback project). The importance of school policy-making capacities is also being researched intensively. Further, the Inspectorate asks schools for written feedback with suggestions on the CIPO indicators.

Strengths

The inspection approach respects the autonomy of schools, but focuses on quality concerns

A first strong point is the conviction of the Inspectorate (based by a decree) that schools are autonomous and responsible for their own quality: that is, schools are the first actors to improve school quality. This generates energy within the education system and schools strongly support this approach.

A second strong point is the differentiated approach. The reason for implementing it has to do with the recognition of the phase of developments of schools in this respect. The stages of external evaluation are neatly planned and schools are given notice in time. The differentiated approach is cyclical, and the cycles differ between schools of high and low quality. Such an approach has been favourably received in the Netherlands: a customer satisfaction survey showed that around 85% of primary schools were satisfied or very satisfied with the Inspectorate's risk-based approach (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2011). Further, in England the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2009, p. 3-4) commissioned a review of the impact of inspections following such an approach of risk detection. Some key findings include that "considerable progress" had been made in a more effective targeting of inspection resources and associated reduction in the cost of inspection. While further improvements can be made, an important finding was that: "Providers found to be inadequate usually improve rapidly, and stronger providers also make good progress; however, too many stand still or decline."

A third strong point is the phase of risk detection (preliminary investigation) that forms the foundation of the differentiated approach. The development of school profiles is a positive initiative. This information forms the basis for the Inspectorate's preliminary investigation and serves as a useful input to school self-evaluation. Schools are very well

informed by the school profile reports containing their position compared to a reference group of other schools.

The CIPO framework for inspection is empirically grounded and comprehensive

A strong point in the Inspectorate’s methodology is the CIPO inspection framework. The components of this framework are empirically grounded and are also in use in the methodologies of other inspectorates. Van Bruggen (2010) stipulates that “most inspectorates write that they base the proposals for the selection of these areas on a mixture of the so – called “good schools” or “effective schools” research with “common sense” and the opinions of experts and teacher unions and teachers’ professional associations”. There is much literature about the question of which quality areas matter most for the success of schools in terms of student results. One of the broadest sources is Scheerens *et al.* (2003), recently updated for the Dutch system (Scheerens *et al.*, 2011) which gives a summary of research about which quality areas count most and concludes with a list of 13 areas (all these areas have been mentioned above already, sometimes in other words).

The CIPO inspection framework is comprehensive, which is a strong point. Context regards, amongst other things, the type of school, characteristics of the site, history and compliance with regulations. Input refers to human, material and structural resources. The framework also checks 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.

Next to the CIPO inspection framework, the Inspectorate performs a review of welfare (*Welzijnsbeleid*), to check the habitability, safety and hygiene at school. This is kept apart in most inspections, if judged positively in the first phase of the inspection visit. This way, there is less or no interference with the inspectors’ examination of the quality of education. Yet, negative judgements of this aspect will lead to a restricted positive recommendation (see for example, Vlaamse overheid, 2011).

Collection of evidence during the inspection can stimulate school self-evaluation activities

During the actual inspection, the team gathers information by means of classroom observations, performs interviews with school management, individual and groups of teachers, and interviews with students. It is not known if interviews with parents are also held.

However, another source of information is the results from any internal evaluations conducted by the school. While schools are not obliged to show inspectors results from their self-evaluation activities, in doing so this is a way to demonstrate their effective policy-making capacity. This can be information of any type: peer reviews, planning and reporting, discussion groups, classroom observation, questionnaires, teacher appraisal, checklists, interviews (see also Chapters 2 and 3). Schools with effective policy-making capacity have these things in place, the other ones to a lesser degree. There is much more information now available to schools than a few years ago, including also reports on truancy prepared by the Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB) and such information can be presented to inspectors during their investigations.

Further, via its thematic evaluations, the Inspectorate can also focus attention on how schools monitor quality in different areas. For example, the evaluation of the innovation initiatives, the so-called laboratory experiments (*proeftuinen*).³ These consist of schools volunteering (sometimes as a group) to address in an innovative way a quality issue that has been revealed via the monitoring of the education system (*e.g.* results from the NAP or international studies). A key factor here is the extent to which schools monitor and evaluate the success of their various innovations.

There is a legal basis for inspection, including the examination of school policy-making capacity

In general, it is a considerable strength that all instruments and methodologies of the Inspectorate have a legal base (Decree of 2009). The responsibility for both compliance and quality evaluations rests with the Inspectorate. For some aspects, a distinction is made between simple compliance with legal obligations and quality of education, but for other aspects this distinction does not exist. The obligations with respect to building and hygiene are checked on the basis of documents during the preliminary phase of inspection and an actual inspection of these aspects is organised separately from the investigation of school quality. This approach is useful as it paves the way for inspectors to focus on school quality.

A school also has obligations with respect to administrative matters and compliance to school specific policies. Compliance to these aspects is seen as an aspect of the policy-making capacity of a school. It is interesting to see that in this way the examination of policy-making capacity has a legal base, which is a strong point. Inspecting whether the school complies with the regulatory requirements in terms of their school-specific policy implies a *de facto* judgement on schools' policy-making capacities. There is some empirical evidence for this: research has shown that the top and bottom 20% of schools can be discriminated from each other by their scores on context, input and process criteria (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).

Although the Inspectorate will not “measure” the “policy-making capacity” of schools, it is seen as a conditional and relative characteristic: the degree of devising the context, input and process variables in such a way that student achievement is fostered. This is in line with the instrumental function of these aspects to the output of pupils (see above). So, a school can be inefficient in respect of its policy-making capacity. If a school has policy-making capacity, it is expected to improve eventual shortcomings by itself, without help from others. Because policy-making capacities function as a lever for school improvement, they serve as the purpose for the focus of inspection in the preliminary phase and as a discriminating variable between a straightforward negative and a restricted positive recommendation in inspections.

Efforts to improve the capacity of the Inspectorate to conduct coherent inspections

Recently, the Inspectorate has taken a variety of measures to assure inter-rater reliability of inspection judgements and reports. Such measures resemble those reported on by Van Bruggen (2010). This is a positive development, particularly in the light of Van Bruggen's finding that not all inspectorates fully discuss inter-rater reliability issues.

To assure quality, the Inspectorate has taken several measures, including:

- Reorganisation of teams: together with the change to the differentiated approach, a reorganisation of the work process is being undertaken in two phases. First, inspection teams have been mixed for adult and secondary education (2010-2012). This will be followed from 2012 on by teams of inspectors from both primary and secondary education. Because of the differences between primary and secondary education, the work processes differ. In primary education the focus is on pupil development and guidance, in secondary education the focus is on subject matter. When taken together, a more integrated approach is the result. The initiative to increase the conformity of the Inspectorate's processes was partly taken as a positive side effect of the publication of inspection reports (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). As the Inspectorate tried to align the reports more, there appeared to be a large difference between the ways of working within the two systems. Such efforts to bridge the differences between school systems are laudable, although experience from the Netherlands indicates that this is not an easy task.⁴
- Introduction of the Quality Indicator Model to improve the inter-rater reliability of judgements on school processes within the CIPO inspection framework. This helps inspectors to map out differences among schools in judging the way processes within a school lead to its output. This model summarises the investigation results in four inter-related categories (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010):
 - Result orientation: drawing up clear and concrete objectives and ways to account for these;
 - Support: staff capacity and material and structural support to achieve objectives;
 - Efficiency: accounting for how school processes contribute to achieving objectives;
 - Development: attention to continuous development and quality improvement.
- Appointment of a quality co-ordinator to ensure the quality of processes and procedures within the Inspectorate (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010).
- Internal reading groups help to create convergence in inspectors' quality judgements. A special form of co-operation between inspectors is the composition of reports for schools that form one pedagogical group. This is an initiative that started only recently. Schools that belong to a given pedagogical group are visited during one period and a composite report is created covering all results of all schools within the group. In addition to being informative for schools and parents, because of the comparisons that can be made more clearly, this form of reporting also is a good means to assure inter-rater reliability. Inspectors can compare their observations, their scores on the separate criteria, their final judgement, and their way of reporting.
- The Inspectorate uses feedback from schools (and other stakeholders) of the inspection process (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010). They gather information by means of questionnaires and

feedback conferences. The results were reported in the annual inspection report (*Onderwijsspiegel*) for the year 2008-2009, but not for 2009-2010 (Vlaamse overheid, 2011; Vlaamse overheid, 2010).

Good balance of school responsibility and external pressure to use inspection results for improvement

A strong point is the framing of the recommendations, which offers schools two possibilities to improve education: positive, restricted in time (school is judged to improve by itself) and negative recommendation (school needs external help to improve). The responsibility remains with the schools while the (obviously necessary) pressure towards improvement is there too. Feedback from researchers during the OECD review indicated that schools do use the inspection reports for improvement of education. Further, the OECD review visits to schools revealed that schools take the Inspectorate's recommendations seriously and work towards improving in the highlighted areas. They feel the inspectors have looked seriously at their education processes and outcomes. Whether this coincides with all shortcomings they know of themselves, cannot be confirmed.

This pressure to improve might also come from a broader public, since the inspection reports are published. Inspection reports for all schools inspected since 2007 are available on the Inspectorate's website (*Doorlichtingen*).⁵ The quality of education is a serious matter and as such parents, students and other stakeholders have a right to know the results of school inspections. A proxy indicator on the extent of public use of the reports can be counted by the number of downloads from the Inspectorate website. During the OECD review, representatives from the Inspectorate reported that the number of hits on the pages with inspection reports is growing. The first page of each report is a summary for non-professional readers.

Challenges

Implementing the new approach to inspection within the Inspectorate

Together with the change to the new approach, the Inspectorate has reorganised the Inspectorate itself (e.g. inspection teams have been combined). Changing these two aspects at the same time was challenging for the inspectors. Also, due to reductions in budget, the inspections visits are under great pressure (there is a shortage of almost 15% of inspection personnel) (Verbauwhede, 2011). On top of this, most inspectors work at home, because there is no central office to meet each other. Inspectors visit the schools in their region and work at home to write the reports. All these factors combined make it difficult to make the cultural change happen, which is necessary for the new approach. Further, it is a challenge to ensure that all inspectors acquire the necessary skills to listen to schools.

Inadequate information base for risk assessment prior to inspections

At the start of the risk assessment phase, the Inspectorate has the information from the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse at its disposal. This does not contain information on student learning results or satisfaction – two important aspects of outputs examined within the CIPO inspection framework. This information becomes

available at the school itself, during the preliminary investigation (the first phase of an inspection visit). So, inspectors are only able to form a comprehensive picture of risks when they are at the school. In this way, risk detection has an *ad hoc* character, because the Inspectorate has no way of determining in advance for all schools which ones are at risk and which are not. So, when output of schools is not comparable, risks are not either. The absence of key output information on student learning results and satisfaction makes the risk detection phase a lot less objective and reduces its usefulness on a practical level. At the system level, the Inspectorate can, in a certain year, only guess what amount of schools is at risk.

Clarifying and making more uniform inspectors' judgements on quality

The Inspectorate has two moments to decide about the quality of a school: at the end of the preliminary phase, when examining the school profile and at the end of the actual inspection, when the team has to decide upon the recommendation. In both phases, output criteria are the dominant criteria.

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. When the development of the new quality framework was discussed in parliament, schools expressed fears that formulating norms for educational quality would be perceived as an external interference with schools' ownership of quality. Yet there is a real drawback to the current situation, as in the absence of clear standards for output and the other components of the CIPO inspection framework, and the concept of a "good school", inspectors face a challenge to apply objective criteria in forming their judgements. This is not conducive to developing a shared feeling of quality in the Flemish community as a whole, nor for communications between schools and inspectors. 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.

Although the framework is conceptually clear, it is not clear as to how a judgement on quality is being made, how much weight is attached to the constituting factors, if these weights are the same for all inspectors in all systems of education. Such challenges were also documented in the recent evaluation of the Inspectorate by the Flemish Court of Audit (Vlaams Parlement, 2011). During the OECD review, some inspectors reported that the judgement is "tailor made". This is a strong point, in so far as this reflects the uniqueness of a school. However, it is a challenge to stimulate uniform judgements among different inspectors. Another challenge to assuring inter-rater reliability of inspection reports, is the fact that often only one inspection team sees one school at a time and therefore the basis for comparison lacks.

For inspectors, the CIPO inspection framework does not work as a rating scale where each aspect is assessed and reported separately. 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. So, the expected level of performance of schools cannot be checked against an absolute, objective standard, but is relative to the output, which in turn also has some relative aspects (see below). Although the inspectors deserve respect for their consequent deliberations about the quality of a school as a whole, it is a challenge to make the CIPO inspection framework function more objectively.

It is a considerable challenge for the Inspectorate to judge school output in light of the different curricula and tests in use across different Flemish schools. Indeed, the recent

evaluation of the Inspectorate finds that inspectors do not always report clearly about the validity of these student test results (Vlaams Parlement, 2011). Although a minimum level of pass grades should indicate if the level of student achievement is in line with the attainment targets, there are different tests in use for the attainment targets, so these criteria are not applied universally. This means that there are no standard student learning objectives in use for school evaluation. Also the fact that the Inspectorate investigates the quality of the schools' evaluation system suggests that on the aspect of "output" the Inspectorate relies on procedural, so non-standard, criteria. This means in theory that a school can be deficient in output, if it has no evaluation system but has good student achievement anyway.

Communicating school understanding and uptake of the new inspection methodology

The new methodology of the Inspectorate, using context, input and processes differently, namely as directly instrumental for output, is not yet clear for schools.⁶ During the OECD review, representatives from the Inspectorate reported that they expect it will probably take some years before schools are able to adopt this new way of looking to their quality. It is a challenge to speed up this process.

Schools have to get accustomed to the new inspection approach. During the OECD review, the review team formed the impression that the schools visited did not always know how to react to the new way of working. This impression was shared more generally by the inspectors interviewed during the OECD review.

To make the CIPO inspection framework work, there are some challenges. For quite a few schools, it will not be clear what level of performance is expected from them. Schools are not very acquainted with the CIPO inspection framework: they do not "live with it", it is not their daily practice. For one thing, this is because of a communication problem, although the Inspectorate works hard on it. The methodology and inspection instruments are amply presented at the Inspectorate's website. Also, schools are offered an introductory meeting with the Inspectorate, to discuss the framework amongst other aspects of the inspection process. Yet, it is quite unlikely that schools that are not due for inspection would have the reflex to consult such materials on the Inspectorate's website. Besides, at good schools, the Inspectorate can be absent a long time (six to seven years in the past, ten years after 2009). Another challenge is that self-evaluation instruments are quite comprehensive, which also goes for those based on the CIPO model adopted in the inspection framework. Most often schools are advised only to work on a certain part during one year, otherwise the workload would be too large. In this way, schools can easily lose sight of all the CIPO-components and the internal consistency of the CIPO inspection framework.

Judging schools' implementation of attainment targets

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a generally accepted starting point to define educational quality is that it means "to realise expectations commonly shared by all stakeholders in an adequate manner". Due to the versatile expectations of stakeholders, concrete definitions may differ widely. This is true for the attainment targets, too. Some schools are of the opinion that these attainment targets are minimal and that they really have to be exceeded in the curricula. So, these curricula put more demands on the pupils.

During the OECD review, we were informed that the transition between primary and secondary education can be risky for pupils if they come from a school that really sees the attainment targets as a minimum. Although the starting point for secondary education should be from the attainment targets at the end of primary education, this may not be the case in all secondary schools. Also, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are additionally handicapped, because they often have to rely more heavily on their context for learning results.

The challenge is to prevent inequality effects from school implementation of the attainment targets, by being able to detect if schools indeed address all pupils with high aspirations and give them adequate support. Another challenge is to guarantee that the attainment targets for primary education indeed guarantee a smooth transition to secondary education.

There is room for improvement in the public use of inspection results

The OECD review team formed the impression that more could be done to promote the public use of inspection results. While the Inspectorate has not yet conducted any serious analysis in this area, it has counted the number of hits and downloads of inspection reports for different schools from their website (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/). However, during the OECD review, discussions with parents indicated that it may only be a minority of parents who independently search for such reports on the Inspectorate's website. Moreover, parents signalled that such reports are potentially of limited value to parents when choosing a school or consulting for other matters, as there is a significant risk that these reports will contain outdated information (given the infrequent nature of school inspections). Further, parent group representatives perceived that teachers – who are the most common point of contact with parents – are often not best placed or even qualified to present good quality information on inspection findings. The recent evaluation of the Inspectorate finds that inspection reports only provide a limited idea of the quality of education, due to the lack of information on student results (Vlaams Parlement, 2011).

Policy recommendations

On the basis of the analysis of strengths and challenges in the inspection of Flemish schools, the OECD review team proposes the following directions for policy development:

- Clarify the criteria for inspection judgements on the quality of education
- Go further in improving the inter-rater reliability of inspection reports
- Strengthen the commitment of inspection and schools to the implementation of Flemish attainment targets
- Ensure regular feedback to schools on key CIPPO inspection framework indicators
- Devise ways to improve public use of inspection results

Clarify the criteria for inspection judgements on the quality of education

Although the CIPPO inspection framework is in use and inspectors use the Quality Indicator Model, the Inspectorate considers the following three pillars as constituting

most concisely the core questions to define the quality of education (Vanotterdijk and Stappers, 2008):

1. Respecting the rules and regulations: this divides between output criteria (reaching attainment targets and pursuing developmental objectives) and compliance to regulations like “ban smoking”, etc.
2. Quality assurance: monitoring and assuring the quality of educational processes by means of a Plan-Do-Check-Act sequence with respect to personnel, logistics and educational policy
3. Capacity to establish good policy: this is relative to those organisational and leadership factors that contribute most to the school’s quality.

Define clear criteria for all components used to determine the quality of education

The OECD review team suggests that clear criteria are defined for the components of each of the three pillars, to be able to present schools a clear-cut judgement about their strengths and weaknesses. This will also promote school uptake of quality assurance and promote policy-making capacity development. For example, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in Scotland has developed quality criteria to support inspectors’ judgements⁷. These show operational descriptions of the quality criteria involved and also examples of very good and fair performance of schools in this respect. Clear criteria must also mean that the set of criteria is exhaustive, so schools can get a quick overview of all criteria.

The OECD review team also suggests that scores or labels (*e.g.* excellent, good, fair, weak) are used for evaluating the criteria. These help to inform schools about their quality and if these scores or labels are accompanied by operational descriptions like those used in Scotland, schools get a concrete picture of what to work on. This also helps to assure that the plan for the improvement process is SMART-ly fomulated: specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic and time-bound.

Clarification of the standards for quality makes it easier to be transparent about the weight given to each of the inspection criteria in forming a judgement on a school’s quality. Some inspectorates use a core set of quality criteria (*e.g.* the Netherlands). Van Bruggen (2010) discusses the process of selecting the most crucial indicators for quality for the decision about the judgement “very weak” and refers to the relation with research about school improvement and school development (*e.g.* Fullan, Rolff, Hargreaves, Lagerweij, Scheerens, etc). One approach to framing quality is to operationalise the three core questions to define the quality of education (see above), formulate criteria above which performance is sufficient or good, and based on these criteria, to determine decision rules for judging a school’s overall quality. This makes quality transparent and manageable for school leaders and teachers. The decision rules can take the form of the one described in Box 4.2, which is an example derived from the Dutch Inspectorate.

Because a school’s output is central to its inspection, there is a need for clear standards for what constitutes excellent, good, fair or weak output. Ideally, the output criteria are absolute on the one hand (does the school perform above or below the required level of attainment?) and relative on the other hand (how much value does the school add, given the background characteristics of the children?). The ideal basis for

standards would be a set of common output measures to all schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium (see below).

Box 4.2 Decision rules – indicators used by the Dutch Inspectorate to determine if a school is (very) weak

In the Netherlands, to judge the quality of primary and secondary schools, the Inspectorate has established a set of about 45 indicators in five broad categories: Input; teaching and learning process; care and support; quality assurance; law and regulations. Among the 45 indicators is a subset of standard indicators, which play a crucial role in distinguishing between different recommendations made by the Inspectorate. The decision rules for judging the quality of primary schools are set as follows:

Weak school – insufficient student achievement results plus an insufficient rating on a maximum of one standard indicator in the areas of teaching and learning process or care and support

Very weak school – insufficient student achievement results plus an insufficient rating on two or more standard indicators in the areas of teaching and learning process or care and support

Sufficient student achievement results are defined as the results of students at the end of primary school are at least at the level that can be expected from a student population with the same characteristics.

The standard indicators used in decision rules¹ for primary education are:

- Teaching and learning process
 - The learning content for Dutch language and mathematics covers all the school attainment targets as objectives to be achieved
 - The learning content for Dutch language and mathematics is offered to a sufficient number of students up to the level of Grade 8
 - Schools with a substantial proportion of students classified with language needs provide Dutch language learning content that fits their educational needs
 - The teachers give clear explanations of the material
 - The teachers realise a task-oriented work environment
 - The students are actively involved in educational activities
- Care and support
 - The school uses a comprehensive system of standardised tools and procedures for monitoring the performance and development of the pupils
 - The school carries out the care in a planned way

Note 1: For clarity, an abbreviated form of the decision rule is presented. For more detail, see www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/content/assets/Actueel_publicaties/2011/Brochure+Toezichtkader+2011+po-vo.pdf.

Source: Inspectie van het Onderwijs (2009).

The availability of output standards would also considerably strengthen the Inspectorates' risk assessment in the preliminary phase, because a clear cut-off for outputs can be defined. This means that inspection visits can be aimed more efficiently to schools that really need this (by visiting schools with weak outputs more often) and – in relation – to specific areas most relevant to a particular school's quality development and improvement needs. Schools with good quality outputs can be visited less frequently and more extensively.

In the Netherlands, risk assessment is performed every year and is used to prevent schools from deteriorating in performance. If in Year 1 a school's results are below the norm, the inspector sends a letter to inform the school's governing body (the school board) with the expectation that the school board takes measures to address the performance concerns. If in Year 2 the school's results are still below the norm, a second preventative step is taken: the school board receives a letter to warn them that in the event that the school's results remain below the norm in Year 3, the school will be judged as "weak" or "very weak". If necessary, the Inspectorate visits the school to discuss measures that are to prevent the school receiving such a negative judgement. The Inspectorate's approach here aims to ensure that in the event of performance concerns, schools improve rapidly and have poor results for as short a period as possible.

Clarify that school self-evaluation capacity is a core component of its educational quality

Currently, schools that show satisfactory outputs in terms of learning results, school career, student outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction will receive a positive recommendation. Unless, a quality concern is detected in the risk assessment or complaints are made about the school, there will be no follow-up until the next inspection round. Although, school policy-making capacity plays a role in the inspectors' judgements on whether a school receives a positive or restricted positive recommendation, not all schools with high quality outputs will necessarily have the high quality self-evaluation processes in place that will help sustain this quality of performance. This is a challenge given that school inspections now occur less frequently. In between inspection visits, schools are free to decide their own pace for improvement and may not draw on robust and effective self-evaluation and improvement cycles.

It is therefore critical to clarify that school self-evaluation procedures and 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.

The Education Review Office (ERO) in New Zealand has recently adopted such an approach. ERO has a dual focus on schools' achievement results and the quality of schools' self-evaluation. Schools considered "high performing" by ERO will have demonstrated competence in using findings from self-evaluation to make informed governance and management decisions. Hence, a school will not be considered "high performing" unless it has both high quality self review and evidence to show that students are making measured progress and that the school is adding value to student achievement. Like the Flemish Community of Belgium, New Zealand has a differentiated external evaluation approach where schools that are performing well are visited less frequently than schools that are facing difficulties. However, in New Zealand, unlike in the Flemish Community of Belgium, even the highest performing school that is not good at self

review could be subject to further external review and intervention, as could a school exemplary in school self review and strategic planning but which for various reasons, is not demonstrating high levels of value added (Nusche *et al.*, forthcoming; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011; ERO, 2010a).

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. Van Bruggen (2010) discusses the quality of the methodology: the way the criteria are formulated, the concrete situations and observations they refer to (see discussion about standardisation above). He also mentions the maintenance of strong codes of interpretation and exchangeability, the exact definition of the room for personal and subjective opinions of inspectors, etc.

The Inspectorate should build upon its use of reports for pedagogical groups of schools. Inter-rater reliability can be improved by increasing the number of schools that have to be studied during an inspection (*e.g.* in the Netherlands this has been done by grouping together schools that belong to a common school board). Another measure is to increase the number of inspectors making the judgement. Van Bruggen (2010) recommends regular dual observations and judgements of teaching episodes and then analysing the results and connecting these with specific training for inspectors. As an example, in Hessen, Germany, there is a rule that the first two classroom observations of an inspection day are always done by two inspectors.

Both elements are present in the reports for pedagogical groups of schools that the Inspectorate has recently started to produce. In further developing this approach, the Inspectorate could also consider to exploit the benefits of the Quality Indicator Model (Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010, pp. 72-73) somewhat further and develop concrete rating scales or specifications of observations that meet the criteria.

Other inspectoral strategies to improve inter-rater reliability of the inspection reports could be used (Van Bruggen, 2010): continuous rotation of groups of inspectors and individuals, sessions about case discussions and case analysis, video training about interpretations of observations. In the Netherlands, there are two kinds of inspectors: the “contact inspector”, who knows the school and has the school in his account, and the “leading inspector” of the inspection visit. This is to prevent any lack of objectivity that may arise from bonding between the contact inspector and his/her schools. Another way to check inter-rater reliability is to analyse trends and typical patterns in the inspection scores against the standards made by different inspectors, as is done, for example, in the Netherlands.

Obviously, the opportunity to meet the whole group of inspectors regularly would also help to increase convergence.

Strengthen the commitment of inspection and schools to the implementation of Flemish attainment targets

The attainment targets offer demarcations to the expected level of pupil achievement, given regular learning capacities and given a certain core curriculum. Attainment targets are absolute measures of the expected minimum output of schools. At the system level, this gives the Flemish Community a benchmark through the years.

The OECD review team suggests that the benefits offered by attainment targets are exploited further into a benchmark for learning by schools. The focus here would be on school improvement and progression of student learning. In parallel – and to reinforce the use of attainment targets for improvement – the OECD review team recommends a collaborative evaluation of the potential to develop a clearer set of goals and criteria for student learning progression in each subject area (see Chapter 2). The developments with respect to school autonomy offer the conditions for schools to learn more from the Flemish attainment targets. The OECD review team sees two important ways to stimulate this further:

- First, if the number of subjects that are covered by the National Assessment Programme is increased, a school feels stimulated to look at the results on the whole spectrum of attainment targets and developmental goals.
- Second, if primary schools receive follow-up results of their pupils in secondary schools, they can learn how to bridge the gap that evidently exists between attainment in some schools for primary and secondary education.

Attainment targets form an important element of external expectations of schools. Van Hoof and Van Petegem (in press) determine being responsive with regard to external expectations as one of seven important principles that collectively aid the successful implementation of self-evaluation in schools. Any further elaboration of attainment targets in the inspection methodology must be checked against the opportunities for schools to learn. Schools learn most if they own their improvement process. In its methodology, the Inspectorate has to make its position with respect to the school's autonomy very clear. At the same time it holds that if school autonomy increases, the need for universal standards to draw the bottom line will increase too. This subtle balance between the Inspectorate and those being inspected is also described by Mertens (in press), Bovens (2010) and Bovens and Hart (2010). Mourshed *et al.* (2010) assert that external evaluation must find a balance between improvement within the school and being accountable.

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. The crucial components of the CIPO inspection framework and their specifications (see above) can be made available to the broader public.

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 (which can be a period of ten years) and when performing a self-evaluation, the OECD review team suggests the following two approaches:

Ensure regular feedback to schools on key CIPO inspection framework indicators

The Inspectorate can provide an annual feedback to schools from the Ministry of Education and Training's Data Warehouse. In general, the Ministry of Education and Training could strive to respond to the growing need for evaluation data and comparison (between schools and in time). It would be fairly easy to devise a compact self-evaluation

scheme and offer schools some “smart school” concepts and technology (e.g. a type of Blackboard and a private login for schools) to use their self-evaluation data in relation to the data from the Data Warehouse. This would reduce paperwork and can offer insights. These data can be ordered along the components of the CIPO inspection framework. See for example the introduction to self-evaluation by schools by HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte3.pdf).

Yet, self-evaluation does not come easy, nor autonomously. There are numerous studies stressing the difficulties of self-evaluation (e.g. Stufflebeam, 1997 and 2000). One factor is that goals and objectives are not clear and/or not measurable. The Inspectorate can contribute greatly to both these aspects. Also, it appears that at least some schools need a certain external push to perform. The OECD review team suggests that the policy practice, subsidising innovations on the basis of self-evaluations, is continued and broadened where possible and appropriate (see Chapter 3). Van Bruggen (2010) mentions the rather rapid growth in uptake of self-evaluation with the Self-evaluation in Schools (SEIS, *Selbst-Evaluation in Schulen*) instruments and methods by many German *Länder* where sometimes within two or three years the proportion of schools using SEIS, grew to 40 % or more (see www.das-macht-schule.de).

Work with schools to build a shared language of quality and evaluation

As described above, the CIPO inspection framework remains relatively abstract for many schools and it is quite unlikely that schools that are not up for an inspection would regularly use the framework and materials provided by the Inspectorate. As a result, the processes of self-evaluation and external evaluation are unlikely to be well aligned and mutually reinforcing. As a first step towards building greater coherence of internal and external evaluation processes, it would be important to build a common language and understanding of quality and evaluation between the Inspectorate and schools.

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 CIPO inspection framework as well as the indicators and criteria of quality that are used.

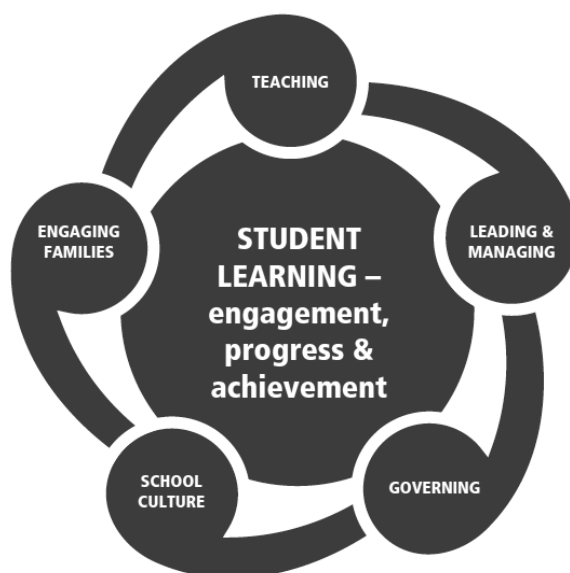
In this context, it is important that schools can actually build a sense of ownership of the CIPO model adopted by the Inspectorate and indicators for school evaluation, so that these can permeate both external and internal evaluation and follow-up. The Flemish Community of Belgium could consider reviewing the CIPO inspection framework and related indicators and criteria of quality in close collaboration with schools and stakeholders. Such a collaborative review could examine how the CIPO inspection framework is currently viewed and used by schools, what are seen as most powerful and productive elements, what issues it raises for effective self-evaluation and how the framework might be simplified (Nusche *et al.*, forthcoming). There is a need to focus strongly on building effective communication and shared understanding of evaluation issues all across the system.

To give an example, New Zealand has developed an indicator framework based around six dimensions of quality that are very similar to the CIPO inspection framework, covering output, process and context dimensions. However, the indicator framework uses a language that is less technical and probably more accessible for professionals working

in schools. The conceptual framework for school evaluation in New Zealand is based on six dimensions of a successful school. Among the six dimensions, student learning (engagement, progress and achievement) is placed symbolically as the centre piece. The five contributory criteria are teaching, leadership, governance, school culture and engagement with families. All five aspects point inwards to the one overriding goal of student achievement. These six dimensions establish the frame for six sets of evaluation indicators which provide a focus for both external evaluation and school self-evaluation (ERO, 2010a; Nusche *et al.*, forthcoming).

The indicator framework provides statements of what practice would look like in a high performing school. It is supported by evaluative prompts and suggested sources of evidence. The framework serves to inform the judgements made by reviewers in New Zealand's external evaluation body (the Education Review Office [ERO]) about school performance as well as to assist in school self-evaluation. It has been described as the “glue” that holds the system together by providing a common conceptual framework to underpin the relationship between ERO and schools. The indicators provide a common evaluation language and are intended as a starting point for dialogue and an impetus to dig deeper (Nusche *et al.*, forthcoming.)

Figure 4.1 Key indicators for school evaluation in New Zealand



Source: Reproduced from ERO (2010b), Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews.

Devise ways to improve public use of inspection results

The OECD review team suggests that more ways are found to stimulate public use of inspection reports. One approach could be to simplify the language of school evaluation to make this more digestible for a broader public (see above). At this moment, the Inspectorate's website shows all reports. The summary at the front of each report is meant for parents. To stimulate further interest of parents, small quality charts can be provided that give a visual (instead of purely verbal) representation of the school's quality. In the Netherlands, much effort has been invested in producing quality information that can be

used by parents and schools together. A special website (Windows for Accountability, *Vensters voor Verantwoording*) provides much of the information from the Inspectorate, but without making reference to criteria or norms (so for example no school is judged as being “very weak”). Of course, schools have a private login which gives them access to a surplus of information. The information base is partly the same as used by the Inspectorate. Schools also can put information on this website that has a benchmarking goal. The visual presentation is very attractive for the broader public.⁸

The Inspectorate could go further with 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.

Notes

1. Before 1991, the orientation of the Inspectorate to school evaluation was rather particularistic (oriented at separate courses and teachers) and predominantly subject-matter oriented.
2. For more information, see the Inspectorate Profile on the SICI website: www.sici-inspectorates.eu/en/members/Inspection_profiles.
3. For further information, see:
www.ond.vlaanderen.be/proeftuinen/netwerking%20en%20vorming/Microsoft%20PowerPoint%20-%20202%20ppt%20evaluatie%20verlengde%20proeftuinen%202008-2011.pdf.
4. In the Netherlands, there was a slightly different approach requiring inspectors from primary and secondary education to inspect in each other's schools, but this could not overcome the cultural differences between school types. Also, the frameworks were not comparable in all respects (nor were they meant to be).
5. Further, the public can send an e-mail request to the Inspectorate to receive inspection reports that predate 2007. Readers can find inspection reports from 2007 onwards at the following site: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/doorlichtingsverslagen/.
6. The focus is now on output and the methodology is clearly stated in regulation. However, the major components are long standing and should not be unfamiliar to schools.
7. See examples on the Scottish Inspectorate's website:
www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/2004-2008+model.htm.
8. Readers can consult the public areas of the website: www.schoolvo.nl/. An overview of indicators presented is available, also: www.venstersvoorverantwoording.nl/nl-NL/pages/5/Over-dit-project.aspx.

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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.

Annex A: The OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

The OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes is designed to respond to the strong interest in evaluation and assessment issues evident at national and international levels. It provides a description of design, implementation and use of assessment and evaluation procedures in countries; analyses strengths and weaknesses of different approaches; and provides recommendations for improvement. The Review looks at the various components of assessment and evaluation frameworks that countries use with the objective of improving student outcomes. These include student assessment, teacher appraisal, school evaluation and system evaluation. The Review focuses on primary and secondary education.¹

The overall purpose is to explore how systems of evaluation and assessment can be used to improve the quality, equity and efficiency of school education.² The overarching policy question is “How can assessment and evaluation policies work together more effectively to improve student outcomes in primary and secondary schools?” The Review further concentrates on five key issues for analysis: (i) Designing a systemic framework for evaluation and assessment; (ii) Ensuring the effectiveness of evaluation and assessment procedures; (iii) Developing competencies for evaluation and for using feedback; (iv) Making the best use of evaluation results; and (v) Implementing evaluation and assessment policies.

Twenty-three countries are actively engaged in the Review. These cover a wide range of economic and social contexts, and among them they illustrate quite different approaches to evaluation and assessment in school systems. This will allow a comparative perspective on key policy issues. These countries prepare a detailed background report, following a standard set of guidelines. Countries can also opt for a detailed review, undertaken by a team consisting of members of the OECD Secretariat and external experts. Twelve OECD countries have opted for a country review. The final comparative report from the OECD Review, bringing together lessons from all countries, will be completed in 2012.

The project is overseen by the Group of National Experts on Evaluation and Assessment, which was established as a subsidiary body of the OECD Education Policy Committee in order to guide the methods, timing and principles of the Review. More details are available from the website dedicated to the Review: www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

Notes

1. The scope of the Review does not include early childhood education and care, apprenticeships within vocational education and training, and adult education.
2. The project's purposes, design and scope are detailed in the OECD 2009 document entitled "OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes: Design and Implementation Plan for the Review", which is available from the project's website www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.

Annex B: Visit itinerary

(25 January – 1 February 2011)

Tuesday 25 January

09.00-10.45	Umbrella organisations and pedagogical advisory services (OVSG, VSKO, GO!, POV)
10.45-11.30	Consultation platform flankerend onderwijsbeleid
11.30-12.30	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training
12.30-13.30	Lunch meeting with authors of the Country Background Report
13.30-15.30	Group of inspectors
15.30-17.00	Department of Education and Training
17.00-18.00	Meeting with Flemish Minister of Education, Youth Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Brussels Affairs

Wednesday 26 January

08.40	Departure to Etterbeek
09.00-11.30	Koninklijk Atheneum Etterbeek (Secondary school Flemish Community Education GO!)
12.00-13.30	Lunch with heads of umbrella organisations (OVSG, VSKO, GO!)
14.00-15.00	Teacher unions
15.00-16.00	School leader associations
16.00-17.00	Flemish Education Council

Thursday 27 January

08.00	Departure to Antwerp
09.00-11.30	Local Government Primary School “de Evenaar” Antwerpen
12.30-13.30	City of Antwerp
14.00-16.30	Provincial Secondary School PITO Stabroek

Friday 28 January

08.30	Departure to Vilvoorde
09.00-11.30	Primary school GO! De Letterboom, Vilvoorde
14.00-15.00	Parent associations
15.00-16.00	Student Umbrella Organisation
16.00-17.00	Vlaamse GemeenschapsCommissie

Monday 31 January

08.30	Departure to Anderlecht
09.00-11.30	Catholic Primary school “Groene School”, Anderlecht (Brussels)
11.30-12.00	Lunch (in Groene School)
12.00	Departure to Sint-Niklaas
13.00-15.30	Catholic Secondary School Sint-Carolus Sint-Niklaas
17.00-18.00	City of Sint-Niklaas, Deputy Mayor

Tuesday 1 February

09.00-10.00	Teacher educators
10.00-11.30	Research Seminar
11.30-12.15	Demo schoolfeedback
12.15-13.00	Social partners (UNIZO, ACW, SERV)

**Preliminary visit undertaken by the OECD Secretariat
(25-26 October 2010)**

Monday 25 October

10.30-11.00	Department for Education and Training, Strategic Policy Unit
11.00-12.30	Country Background Report authors
13.00-14.00	Trade unions
14.00-15.00	Students / Flemish Pupil Umbrella Organisation
15.00-17.00	Ministry of Education and Training and external experts in evaluation and assessment
17.00-18.00	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training
18.00-19.00	Umbrella Organisation Municipal Education

Tuesday 26 October

09.30-11.00	Organising bodies umbrella organisations
11.00-12.00	Information session on schoolfeedback and website <i>Toetsen voor scholen</i> (“Assessment instruments for schools”)
14.00-15.00	Umbrella organisations of parent associations
15.30-16.30	Concluding meeting, Department for Education and Training Strategic Policy Unit

Annex C: Composition of the OECD review team

Marian Hulshof, a Dutch national, is the programme manager of Research and Development within the Dutch Inspectorate. Current themes include transparency, information exchange between parents and the Inspectorate, accountability, governance, effects of inspections, as well as strategic development for the Inspectorate and international aspects of evaluation and inspection within the Inspectorate and outside (*e.g.* OECD Group of national experts on Evaluation and Assessment). She has worked with the Inspectorate since 2001 and previously co-ordinated Inspectorate work on quality information on higher education (HE) studies and research on Vocational Education and Training (VET) studies and institutions (*e.g.* transition from secondary education to VET, risk detection in private institutions). From 1983-2001 she was a senior researcher at the Institute for Research on Higher Education (IOWO) at Nijmegen University. Her research included learning psychology (motivation, attribution theory) and policy research for higher education (innovation, quality information on higher education studies based on visitation reports).

Deborah Nusche, a German national, is a Policy Analyst in the OECD Directorate for Education. She is currently working on the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. At the OECD, she previously worked on the Thematic Review of Migrant Education and the Improving School Leadership study. She has led country review visits on migrant education and participated in case study visits on school leadership in several countries. She also co-authored the OECD reports “Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students” (2010) and “Improving School Leadership” (2008). She has previous experience with UNESCO and the World Bank and holds an M.A. in International Affairs from Sciences Po Paris.

Claire Shewbridge, a British national, is an Analyst in the OECD Directorate for Education and is currently working for the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. She most recently worked on the OECD Review on Migrant Education working on country-specific analysis for the Netherlands, Austria and Norway and co-authored the OECD report “Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students” (2010). For five years, Claire co-ordinated the PISA thematic report series. She also led analysis of student attitudes towards science learning and the environment in the PISA 2006 survey. Her earlier statistical work with the OECD included indicators in Education at a Glance, the OECD Employment Outlook and the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee Annual Report. She co-ordinated the review and acted as *Rapporteur* for the OECD review team.

Professor Louise Stoll (PhD), a British and Canadian national, is a former President of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and School Improvement, part-time Professor at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning at the Institute of Education, University of London and international researcher and consultant. Until June 2003, she was Professor in Education at the University of Bath. Previously, Louise was a primary teacher and researcher in inner London; research director at the Halton Board of Education, Ontario working on the Effective Schools Project; and Co-ordinating Director of the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre at the Institute of Education. Her research and development activity in England and internationally over 30 years has focused on how schools, school districts and national systems promote effective school improvement, and create capacity, with particular emphasis on leadership and development of professional learning communities. She is also interested in how practitioners engage with research and data. She is author and editor of many publications, articles and chapters on school improvement and creating capacity for learning.

Annex D: School groups used by the Catholic umbrella organisation VSKO for reporting results

VSKO's profiles based on the equal opportunities policy (GOK) for schools participating in the test at the end of primary education (IDP)

Group 1: A disproportionately high percentage of non-deprived non-native students (at least 25% and 43.5% on average). The mean proportion of disadvantaged foreign language students is 13% to 33 %. These are mainly schools in some Brussels municipalities, and in some schools in the Flemish periphery around Brussels and Antwerp.

Group 2: With a majority of non-Dutch disadvantaged 61 students (78- 87%), a very small proportion of Dutch disadvantaged pupils (average 10%, max 20%) and very few non-Dutch pupils (average 3%).

Group 3: Something more disadvantaged students, but still a majority non-Dutch disadvantaged pupils (60% – 80%, average 72%).

Group 4: A relatively high proportion of disadvantaged Dutch students (averaging over one quarter, rising to three quarters). The proportion of non-Dutch disadvantaged pupils is less than 60% (average about 40%), while the share of non-disadvantaged non-Dutch students is less than 25% (average 10%).

Group 5: Counting at least 50% non-Dutch pupils (average 75%), the majority of which (at least 33% of total) are underprivileged (average 54%). These schools are often referred to as “concentration schools”.

Source: Verhaeghe, J.P., Duerloo, M. and Masquillier, B. (2010), *Nieuwe referentiegroepen IDP op basis van GOK-indicatoren 2008 – Tot welke groep behoort jouw school?*, School + visie, No. 1, August-September 2010.

Annex E: Comparative indicators on evaluation and assessment

This annex provides some contextual statistics. Wherever possible, statistics are presented for the Flemish Community of Belgium. However, the first table presents internationally comparable information for Belgium.

Table E.1 Educational attainment in Belgium

	Belgium	OECD average
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Source: OECD, 2011		
% of population that has attained at least upper secondary education, by age group (excluding ISCED 3C short programmes) ¹ (2009)		
Ages 25-64	71	73
Ages 25-34	83	81
Ages 35-44	78	77
Ages 45-54	67	71
Ages 55-64	54	61
% of population that has attained tertiary education, by age group (2009)		
Ages 25-64	33	30
Ages 25-34	42	37
Ages 35-44	37	32
Ages 45-54	30	27
Ages 55-64	23	22
Average annual growth rate in levels of educational attainment from 1999 to 2009		
Below upper secondary	-3.6	-3.4
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	1.9	0.9
Tertiary education	2.3	3.7

Table E.2 Indicators on education system evaluation, school evaluation, teacher appraisal and student assessment in the Flemish Community of Belgium

	Flemish Community	Inter-national bench-mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
STUDENT PERFORMANCE			
Source: OECD, 2010a			
Mean performance in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) (15-year-olds) (2009)			
Reading literacy	519	493	6/35
Mathematics literacy	537	496	3/35
Science literacy	526	501	8/35
Top performers in reading (% of students proficient at Levels 5 or 6)	12.6%	7.6%	
Lowest performers in reading (% of students proficient below Level 2)	13.0%	18.8%	
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHER WORKFORCE (lower secondary education, 2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
Age distribution of teachers			
Teachers aged under 25 years	8.3	3.0	3/23
Teachers aged 25-29 years	18.4	12.1	3/23
Teachers aged 30-39 years	26.3	28.0	12/23
Teachers aged 40-49 years	23.6	29.6	17/23
Teachers aged 50-59 years	22.9	23.5	14/23
Teachers aged 60 years and more	0.5	3.9	21/23
Gender distribution of teachers (% of females)	68.9	69.3	12/23
Teachers' educational attainment			
% of teachers who completed an ISCED 5A qualification or higher	12.4	83.7	23/23
Employment status of teachers			
% of teachers permanently employed	80.7	84.5	16/23
TEACHER SALARIES in public institutions			
Source: OECD, 2010b			
Annual teacher salaries (2008)			
Primary – starting salary (US\$)	29223	28949	15/29
Primary – 15 years experience (US\$)	41093	39426	14/29
Primary – top of scale (US\$)	50190	48022	12/29
Primary – ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita	1.17	1.16	13/29
Lower secondary – starting salary (US\$)	29223	30750	16/29
Lower secondary – 15 years experience (US\$)	41093	41927	14/29
Lower secondary – top of scale (US\$)	50190	50649	13/29
Lower secondary – ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita	1.17	1.22	15/29
Upper secondary – starting salary (US\$)	36360	32563	8/28
Upper secondary – 15 years experience (US\$)	52667	45850	7/28
Upper secondary – top of scale (US\$)	63391	54717	6/28
Upper secondary – ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita	1.51	1.29	7/28
Number of years from starting to top salary (lower secondary education) (2008)	27	24	=13/27
Decisions on payments for teachers in public schools (2008)			
Criteria for base salary and additional payments awarded to teachers in public institutions			
● Base salary/ ■ Additional yearly payment / Δ Additional incidental payment			
Years of experience as a teacher	●	●29 ■9 Δ8	
Management responsibilities in addition to teaching duties	-	●12 ■18 Δ7	
Teaching more classes or hours than required by full-time contract	Δ	●2 ■10 Δ17	
Special tasks (career guidance or counselling)	-	●4 ■13 Δ11	
Teaching in a disadvantaged, remote or high cost area (location allowance)	-	●9 ■18 Δ4	
Special activities (e.g. sports and drama clubs, homework clubs, summer schools etc.)	-	●1 ■8 Δ12	
Teaching students with special educational needs (in regular schools)	-	●9 ■11 Δ5	
Teaching courses in a particular field	-	●5 ■8 Δ4	
Holding an initial educational qualification higher than the minimum qualification required to enter the teaching profession	●	●18 ■9 Δ5	

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Holding a higher than minimum level of teacher certification or training obtained during professional life	■	●15 ■11 Δ3	
Outstanding performance in teaching	-	●5 ■9 Δ8	
Successful completion of professional development activities	-	●10 ■7 Δ4	
Reaching high scores in the qualification examination	-	●4 ■3 Δ3	
Holding an educational qualification in multiple subjects	-	●3 ■4 Δ3	
Family status (married, number of children)	-	●2 ■8 Δ1	
Age (independent of years of teaching experience)	-	●4 ■3 Δ1	
Other	■	●1 ■8 Δ2	

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (lower secondary education) (2007/08)

Source: OECD, 2009

Teacher participation in professional development			
% of teachers who undertook some professional development in the previous 18 months	90.3	88.5	12/23
Average days of professional development across all teachers	8.0	15.3	20/23
Average days of professional development among those who received some	8.8	17.3	20/23
Average % of professional development days taken that were compulsory	33.6	51.0	22/23
Types of professional development undertaken by teachers (% of teachers)			
Courses and workshops	85.2	81.2	11/23
Education conferences and seminars	32.6	48.9	22/23
Qualification programmes	17.8	24.5	16/23
Observation visits to other schools	15.1	27.6	17/23
Professional development network	25.7	40.0	18/23
Individual and collaborative research	31.8	35.4	13/23
Mentoring and peer observation	22.1	34.9	16/23
Reading professional literature	79.6	77.7	13/23
Informal dialogue to improve teaching	91.3	92.6	18/23
Impact of different types of professional development undertaken by teachers			
% of teachers reporting that the professional development undertaken had a moderate or high impact upon their development as a teacher			
Courses and workshops	52.9	80.6	23/23
Education conferences and seminars	42.6	73.9	23/23
Qualification programmes	67.0	87.2	23/23
Observation visits to other schools	47.0	74.9	23/23
Professional development network	53.9	80.2	23/23
Individual and collaborative research	67.6	89.3	23/23
Mentoring and peer observation	48.1	77.6	23/23
Reading professional literature	57.8	82.8	23/23
Informal dialogue to improve teaching	71.7	86.7	23/23
Teachers' high professional development needs			
% of teachers indicating they have a 'high level of need' for professional development in the following areas			
Content and performance standards	12.0	16.0	13/23
Student assessment practices	15.6	15.7	9/23
Classroom management	12.1	13.3	11/23
Subject field	17.5	17.0	7/23
Instructional practices	14.1	17.1	12/23
ICT teaching skills	14.8	24.7	=21/23
Teaching special learning needs students	12.8	31.3	23/23
Student discipline and behaviour problems	11.8	21.4	20/23
School management and administration	2.4	9.7	23/23
Teaching in a multicultural setting	3.7	13.9	23/23
Student counselling	11.0	16.7	15/23

TEACHER PERCEPTION OF SELF-EFFICACY (lower secondary education) (2007/08)

Source: OECD, 2009

% of teachers who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement "Teachers feel that they are making a significant educational difference"	97.2	92.3	=3/23
% of teachers who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statement "Teachers feel that when they try really hard, they can make progress with even the most difficult and unmotivated students"	80.6	82.7	15/23

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
SYSTEM EVALUATION			
Curriculum and examination regulations, public schools only			
Source: OECD, 2010b; OECD 2011			
Primary education (2008)			
A standard curriculum or partially standardised curriculum is required	Yes	Yes:27 No:2	
Compulsory national examination ⁴	No	Yes:4 No:24	
Lower secondary education			
A standard curriculum or partially standardised curriculum is required (2008)	Yes	Yes:27 No:2	
National examination offered (2009)	No	Yes:13 No:18	
Of which: compulsory in public schools	a	Yes:11 No:2	
Reporting of results from national assessments (lower secondary education) (2009)			
Source: OECD, 2011			
National assessment at lower secondary level	Yes	Yes:19 No:12	
Compulsory in public schools	No	Yes:13 No: 6	
Based on norm or criterion reference	Criterion	Norm:7 Criterion:13	
Results are shared with:			
External audience in addition to education authorities	Yes	Yes:18 No:1	
School administrators directly	Yes	Yes:18 No:0	
Classroom teachers directly	Yes	Yes:13 No:5	
Parents directly	Yes	Yes:13 No:5	
Students directly	Yes	Yes:13 No:4	
The media directly	Yes	Yes:10 No:8	
Features of results reporting			
Performance level for most recent year	Yes	Yes:10 No:3	
"Value added" or growth in student achievement based on student progress over 2(+) years	No	Yes:5 No:13	
Context sensitive	Yes	Yes:7 No:7	
Compared with other groups or populations of students	Yes	Yes:10 No:4	
Reported together with other indicators of school quality	No	Yes:3 No:12	
Used by authorities external to the school for sanctions or rewards	No	Yes:3 No:13	
Existence of national tests (2008-09) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
	Yes	Yes:29 No:5	
Number of national tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education)			
Source: Eurydice, (2009)			
Compulsory tests	-	2.7	-
Sample tests	2	2.3	=4/11
Optional tests ⁵	-	2.3	-
Years of testing	6,8		
Number of subjects covered in national tests ⁶	2	3 subjects :11 2 subjects:14	3+ subjects:13 Does not apply:5
Main aims of nationally standardised tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Taking decisions about the school career of pupils	No	No:17 Yes:13	
Monitoring schools and/or the education system	Yes	No:9 Yes:21	
Identifying individual learning needs	No	No:12 Yes:18	
Bodies responsible for setting national tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
●Tests for taking decisions about the school career of pupils/ ■Tests for other purposes/ ΔNo national tests			
A unit/agency within the ministry of education without external players	-	●2 ■0 Δ5	
A unit/agency within the ministry of education with external players	■	●3 ■10 Δ5	
A public body distinct from the ministry, which specialises in education or educational evaluation	-	●11 ■16 Δ5	
A private body or university department	■	●4 ■4 Δ5	
People in charge of administering national tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
●Tests for taking decisions about the school career of pupils/ ■Tests for other purposes/ ΔNo national tests			
Class teachers	-	●10 ■15 Δ5	
Class teachers + external people	■	●1 ■3 Δ5	
Other teachers from the same school	-	●3 ■3 Δ5	

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Other teachers from the same school + external people	-	●1 ■4 Δ5	
External people alone	-	●3 ■5 Δ5	
Persons in charge of marking national tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
●Tests for taking decisions about the school career of pupils/ ■Tests for other purposes/ ΔNo national tests			
Class teachers	-	●7 ■10 Δ5	
Class teachers + external people	-	●4 ■2 Δ5	
Other teachers from the same school	-	●1 ■3 Δ5	
Other teachers from the same school + external persons	-	●0 ■1 Δ5	
External persons alone	■	●8 ■16 Δ5	
Standardisation of test questions (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Questions are the same for all pupils taking one national test	No	Yes:19 No:11	
Questions are not the same for all pupils taking one national test	Yes	Yes:6	
Whether test questions are standardised or not varies depending on type of test	No	Yes:2	
Use of ICT in national testing (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
ICT is currently used in national tests	Yes	Yes:11 No:19	
Use of ICT for on-screen testing	No	Yes:3	
Use of ICT for marking tests	Yes	Yes:8	
Participation of students with special educational needs (SEN) in national testing (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Pupils with SEN may take part in national testing	Yes	Yes:27 No:3	
Participation in national testing for pupils with SEN is compulsory	Yes	Yes:12	
Participation in national testing for pupils with SEN is optional	No	Yes:9	
Participation varies depending on type of test, level of education or type of school	No	Yes:5	
Communication of the results of national tests to local authorities (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Local authorities have access to aggregated results for their own area	No	Yes:17	
Use of achievement data for accountability (2009) (15-year-olds) Source: OECD, 2010c			
% of students in schools where the principal reported that achievement data are used in the following procedures			
Posted publicly	0.9	36.6	33/33
Used in evaluation of the principal's performance	5.4	36.1	31/33
Used in evaluation of teachers' performance	23.6	44.8	26/33
Used in decisions about instructional resource allocation to the school	3.7	32.7	31/33
Tracked over time by an administrative authority	54.6	66.2	24/33
SCHOOL EVALUATION			
School inspection at the lower secondary level (2009) Source: OECD, 2011			
School inspections are required as part of the accountability system	Yes	Yes:22 No:7	
School inspections are a component of the school accreditation process	Yes	Yes:6 No:16	
School inspections target low performance schools	Yes	Yes:8 No:13	
Extent to which school inspections are structured ⁷	Highly	Highly:14 Partially:6 Unstructured:1	
Frequency of school inspections (public schools only)	Every 3+ years	Every 3+ years:9 Once every 3 years:3 Once every 2 years:1 Once per year:2 More than once a year:3 No requirements:3	
Aspects addressed during school inspections			
Compliance with rules and regulations	Yes	Yes:20 No:1	
Financial management	No	Yes:13 No:8	
Quality of instruction	Yes	Yes:19 No:2	
Student performance	Yes	Yes:17 No:4	
Satisfaction and perceptions of students	Yes	Yes:14 No:7	
Satisfaction and perceptions of parents	Yes	Yes:13 No:8	
Satisfaction and perceptions of staff	Yes	Yes:13 No:8	
School inspection results are shared with:			

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
External audience in addition to education authorities	Yes	Yes:19 No:3	
Higher level education authorities directly	Yes	Yes:16 No:3	
School administrators directly	Yes	Yes:19 No:0	
Classroom teachers directly	Yes	Yes:16 No:3	
Parents directly	Yes	Yes:11 No:8	
Students directly	No	Yes:8 No:10	
The media directly	Yes	Yes:9 No:10	
Possible influence of evaluation by school inspectorate (or equivalent) (2009)			
Source: OECD, 2011			
None/Low/Moderate/High/Not applicable			
Performance evaluation			
School performance	High	None:2 Low:4 Moderate:4 High:11 Not applicable: 5	
School administration	Moderate	None:3 Low:3 Moderate:7 High:8 Not applicable: 5	
Individual teachers	Moderate	None:3 Low:3 Moderate:7 High:7 Not applicable:8	
Rewards and sanctions			
The size of the school budget	Low	None:11 Low:8 Moderate:1 High:0 Not applicable:6	
The provision of another financial reward or sanction	High	None:9 Low:4 Moderate:2 High:3 Not applicable:7	
The assistance provided to teachers to improve their teaching skills	Moderate	None:2 Low:5 Moderate:9 High:5 Not applicable:5	
Remuneration and bonuses received by teachers	a	None:13 Low:0 Moderate:3 High:0 Not applicable:9	
Likelihood of school closure	High	None:7 Low:1 Moderate:2 High:9 Not applicable:7	
Requirements for school self-evaluations (2009) Source: OECD, 2011			
Primary education	No	Yes:21 No:10	
Component of school inspections	a	Yes:13 No:6	
Upper secondary education	No	Yes:23 No:10	
Component of school inspections	a	Yes:15 No:5	
Lower secondary education	No	Yes:20 No:10	
Component of school inspections	a	Yes:13 No:5	
Aspects addressed during school self-evaluations (lower secondary education)			
Compliance with rules and regulations	a	Yes:14 No:4	
Financial management	a	Yes:12 No:5	
Quality of instruction	a	Yes:17 No:1	
Student performance	a	Yes:16 No:2	
Satisfaction and perceptions of students	a	Yes:16 No:2	
Satisfaction and perceptions of parents	a	Yes:15 No:3	
Satisfaction and perceptions of staff	a	Yes:13 No:5	
School self-evaluation results are shared with (lower secondary education):			
External audience in addition to education authorities	a	Yes:16 No:3	
Higher level education authorities directly	a	Yes:9 No:7	
School inspectorates directly	a	Yes:11 No:1	
School administrators directly	a	Yes:14 No:1	
Classroom teachers directly	a	Yes:15 No:1	
Parents directly	a	Yes:10 No:6	
Students directly	a	Yes:8 No:7	
The media directly	a	Yes:5 No:10	
Extent to which school self-evaluations are structured (lower secondary education)	a	Highly:3 Partially:11 Unstructured:4	
Possible influence of school self-evaluations (2009)			
Source: OECD, 2011			
None/Low/Moderate/High/Not applicable			
Performance evaluation			
School performance	a	None:0 Low:4 Moderate:6 High:5 Not applicable:8	
School administration	a	None:1 Low:6 Moderate:3 High:6 Not applicable:8	
Individual teachers	a	None:2 Low:6 Moderate:2 High:5 Not applicable:9	

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Rewards and sanctions			
The school budget	a	None:9 Low:3 Moderate:1 High:2 Not applicable:9	
The provision of another financial reward or sanction	a	None:7 Low:5 Moderate:0 High:1 Not applicable:10	
The assistance provided to teachers to improve their teaching skills	a	None:3 Low:3 Moderate:7 High:3 Not applicable:8	
Remuneration and bonuses received by teachers	a	None:6 Low:4 Moderate:1 High:0 Not applicable: 12	
Likelihood of school closure	a	None:7 Low:4 Moderate:1 High:1 Not applicable:11	
Frequency and type of school evaluations (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers working in schools where school evaluations were conducted with the following frequency over the last five years			
Frequency of school self-evaluation			
Never	22.0	20.2	=9/23
Once	33.4	16.2	1/23
2-4 times	30.9	18.3	1/23
Once per year	12.9	34.9	21/23
More than once per year	0.7	10.3	22/23
Frequency of external evaluation			
Never	10.4	30.4	20/23
Once	54.6	30.8	3/23
2-4 times	32.7	20.5	3/23
Once per year	1.9	11.4	20/23
More than once per year	0.4	7.0	21/23
No school evaluation from any source	5.8	13.8	15/23
Criteria of school evaluations (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers whose school principal reported that the following criteria were considered with high or moderate importance in school self-evaluations or external evaluations			
Student test scores	85.6	76.2	8/23
Retention and pass rates of students	93.8	70.8	3/23
Other student learning outcomes	80.4	78.9	11/23
Student feedback on the teaching they receive	72.4	72.7	11/23
Feedback from parents	71.5	77.3	17/23
How well teachers work with the principal and their colleagues	92.3	83.7	4/23
Direct appraisal of classroom teaching	70.4	71.1	12/23
Innovative teaching practices	78.9	76.7	11/23
Relations between teachers and students	90.9	87.1	=8/23
Professional development undertaken by teachers	94.9	81.5	2/23
Teachers' classroom management	72.8	80.7	16/23
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s)	79.3	78.2	12/23
Teachers' knowledge and understanding of instructional practices in their main subject field(s)	79.8	77.5	14/23
Teaching of students with special learning needs	72.9	77.2	13/23
Student discipline and behaviour	66.5	83.6	22/23
Teaching in a multicultural setting	35.3	52.9	21/23
Extra-curricular activities with students (e.g. school plays and performances, sporting activities)	62.9	74.5	20/23
Impacts of school evaluations upon schools (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers whose school principal reported that school evaluations (external or self-evaluation) had a high or moderate level of influence on the following			
Level of school budget or its distribution within schools	37.7	38.0	9/23
Performance feedback to the school	94.3	81.3	3/23
Performance appraisal of the school management	79.1	78.7	14/23
Performance appraisal of teachers	73.8	71.1	=12/23
Assistance provided to teachers to improve their teaching	78.0	70.3	10/23
Teachers' remuneration and bonuses	2.6	26.1	=21/23

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Publication of school evaluations (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers in schools where school evaluation results were :			
Published; or	76.8	55.3	3/23
Used in school performance tables	29.7	28.7	=9/23
Use of student test results in school evaluation (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Test results may be used for evaluation	Yes	Yes:15 No:15	
Test results used for external evaluation	No	Yes:5	
Recommendations or support tools for the use of results during internal evaluation	Yes	Yes:7	
Use varies depending on type of test, level of education or type of school	No	Yes:3	
Publication of individual school results in national tests (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
Individual school results may be published	No	Yes:10 No:20	
Publication organised, or required of schools, by central/local governments	No	Yes:9	
Publication at the discretion of schools	No	Yes:1	
Accountability to parents (2009) (15-year-olds) Source: OECD, 2010c			
% of students in schools where principals reported that their school provides parents with information on student performance:			
Relative to other students in the school	58.9	46.7	12/33
Relative to national or regional benchmarks	1.9	47.3	33/33
As a group relative to students in the same grade in other schools	1.4	23.5	33/33
TEACHER APPRAISAL			
Frequency and source of teacher appraisal and feedback (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported having received appraisal and/or feedback on their work with the following frequency from the following sources			
Feedback received from the principal			
Never	19.1	22.0	10/23
Less than once every two years	24.0	9.2	1/23
Once every two years	10.0	4.5	1/23
Once per year	25.2	22.8	9/23
Twice per year	9.9	12.3	15/23
3 or more times per year	8.4	17.1	23/23
Monthly	1.9	6.6	23/23
More than once per month	1.4	5.4	23/23
Feedback received from other teachers or members of the school management team			
Never	41.9	28.6	5/23
Less than once every two years	10.4	6.9	4/23
Once every two years	3.1	2.6	8/23
Once per year	11.0	13.3	14/23
Twice per year	6.7	9.7	18/23
3 or more times per year	14.5	19.3	20/23
Monthly	7.0	10.4	20/23
More than once per month	5.5	9.1	21/23
Feedback received from an external individual or body (e.g. external inspector)			
Never	39.9	50.7	15/23
Less than once every two years	41.2	19.0	2/23
Once every two years	7.6	5.4	7/23
Once per year	7.4	13.2	15/23
Twice per year	1.7	5.4	19/23
3 or more times per year	1.4	4.3	21/23
Monthly	0.4	1.2	=19/23
More than once per month	0.3	0.8	=18/23
Criteria for teacher appraisal and feedback (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported that the following criteria were considered with high or moderate importance in the appraisal and/or feedback they received			
Student test scores	53.2	65.0	18/23
Retention and pass rates of students	52.0	56.2	14/23
Other student learning outcomes	47.9	68.4	22/23

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Student feedback on the teaching they receive	59.1	72.8	21/23
Feedback from parents	51.4	69.1	23/23
How well they work with the principal and their colleagues	78.3	77.5	9/23
Direct appraisal of classroom teaching	77.5	73.5	12/23
Innovative teaching practices	67.2	70.7	17/23
Relations with students	82.5	85.2	16/23
Professional development undertaken	63.9	64.5	11/23
Classroom management	74.4	79.7	16/23
Knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s)	73.3	80.0	17/23
Knowledge and understanding of instructional practices in their main subject field(s)	72.5	78.2	16/23
Teaching of students with special learning needs	54.3	57.2	14/23
Student discipline and behaviour	64.9	78.2	21/23
Teaching in a multicultural setting	31.6	45.0	18/23
Extra-curricular activities with students (e.g. school performances, sporting activities)	52.0	62.3	18/23
Outcomes of teacher appraisal and feedback (lower secondary education) (2007-08)			
Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported that the appraisal and/or feedback they received let to a modest or large change in the following aspects of their work and careers			
A change in salary	0.4	9.1	23/23
A financial bonus or another kind of monetary reward	0.1	11.1	23/23
A change in the likelihood of career advancement	3.7	16.2	23/23
Public recognition from the principal and/or their colleagues	20.7	36.4	21/23
Opportunities for professional development activities	7.1	23.7	23/23
Changes in work responsibilities that make the job more attractive	11.9	26.7	23/23
A role in school development initiatives (e.g. curriculum development group)	10.1	29.6	23/23
Actions undertaken following the identification of a weakness in a teacher appraisal (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers whose school principal reported that the following occurs if an appraisal of teachers' work identifies a specific weakness			
The principal ensures that the outcome is reported to the teacher			
Never	0.8	2.6	=9/23
Sometimes	1.9	9.5	20/23
Most of the time	21.9	25.8	15/23
Always	75.3	62.1	7/23
The principal ensures that measures to remedy the weakness in their teaching are discussed with the teacher			
Never	0.0	1.0	=11/23
Sometimes	2.9	9.4	18/23
Most of the time	29.1	30.7	13/23
Always	68.0	58.9	8/23
The principal, or others in the school, establishes a development or training plan for the teacher to address the weakness in their teaching			
Never	3.3	10.5	20/23
Sometimes	40.3	33.0	7/23
Most of the time	40.5	35.9	5/23
Always	15.8	20.6	17/23
The principal, or others in the school, imposes material sanctions on the teacher (e.g. reduced annual increases in pay)			
Never	99.4	86.0	1/23
Sometimes	0.3	11.3	23/23
Most of the time	0.0	1.8	=14/23
Always	0.3	0.9	=12/23
The principal, or others in the school, report the underperformance to another body to take action (e.g. governing board, local authority, school inspector)			
Never	18.8	51.0	22/23
Sometimes	65.3	37.3	1/23
Most of the time	8.3	6.8	7/23
Always	7.7	4.9	4/23
The principal ensures that the teacher has more frequent appraisals of their work			
Never	3.0	9.0	19/23
Sometimes	39.9	34.5	8/23
Most of the time	43.3	41.3	10/23
Always	13.8	15.2	13/23

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
Teacher perceptions of the appraisal and/or feedback they received (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported the following about the appraisal and/or feedback they had received in their school			
Appraisal and/or feedback contained a judgement about the quality of the teacher's work	77.3	74.7	11/23
Appraisal and/or feedback contained suggestions for improving certain aspects of teacher's work	64.9	58.0	7/23
Appraisal and/or feedback was a fair assessment of their work as a teacher in this school			
Strongly disagree	3.0	4.4	=14/23
Disagree	9.0	12.4	=18/23
Agree	57.2	63.3	18/23
Strongly agree	30.8	19.9	4/23
Appraisal and/or feedback was helpful in the development of their work as teachers in this school			
Strongly disagree	4.2	5.6	14/23
Disagree	13.4	15.9	15/23
Agree	60.4	61.8	14/23
Strongly agree	22.0	16.8	4/23
Teacher perceptions of the personal impact of teacher appraisal and feedback (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported the following changes following the appraisal and/or feedback they received in their school			
the following personal impact from appraisal and feedback			
Change in their job satisfaction			
A large decrease	2.5	2.5	12/23
A small decrease	4.7	4.8	=11/23
No change	51.4	41.2	3/23
A small increase	29.9	37.3	20/23
A large increase	11.5	14.2	13/23
Change in their job security			
A large decrease	1.0	1.5	=16/23
A small decrease	1.5	3.0	20/23
No change	68.3	61.9	11/23
A small increase	15.9	21.8	15/23
A large increase	13.3	11.8	8/23
Impact of teacher appraisal and feedback upon teaching (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who reported that the appraisal and/or feedback they received directly led to or involved moderate or large changes in the following			
Classroom management practices	20.5	37.6	22/23
Knowledge or understanding of the teacher's main subject field(s)	16.7	33.9	20/23
Knowledge or understanding of instructional practices	20.1	37.5	21/23
A development or training plan for teachers to improve their teaching	16.4	37.4	22/23
Teaching of students with special learning needs	19.1	27.2	19/23
Student discipline and behaviour problems	20.1	37.2	22/23
Teaching of students in a multicultural setting	8.2	21.5	20/23
Emphasis placed by teachers on improving student test scores in their teaching	19.6	41.2	21/23
Teacher appraisal and feedback and school development (lower secondary education) (2007-08) Source: OECD, 2009			
% of teachers who agree or strongly agree with the following statements about aspects of appraisal and/or feedback in their school			
In this school, the school principal takes steps to alter the monetary reward of the persistently underperforming teacher	5.9	23.1	22/23
In this school, the sustained poor performance of a teacher would be tolerated by the rest of the staff	25.9	33.8	17/23
In this school, teachers will be dismissed because of sustained poor performance	43.6	27.9	3/23
In this school, the principal uses effective methods to determine whether teachers are performing well or badly	49.5	55.4	14/23
In this school, a development or training plan is established for teachers to improve their work as teachers	45.1	59.7	19/23
In this school, the most effective teachers receive the greatest monetary or non-monetary rewards	5.0	26.2	23/23
In this school, if I improve the quality of my teaching I will receive increased monetary or non-monetary rewards	4.1	25.8	23/23

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
In this school, if I am more innovative in my teaching I will receive increased monetary or non-monetary rewards	4.2	26.0	23/23
In this school, the review of teacher's work is largely done to fulfil administrative requirements	37.9	44.3	17/23
In this school, the review of teacher's work has little impact upon the way teachers teach in the classroom	44.4	49.8	15/23
Official methods for the individual or collective evaluation of teachers (2006-07)			
Source: Eurydice (2008)			
Teacher evaluation exists	Yes	Yes:30 No:3	
Teacher inspection on an individual or collective basis	Yes	Yes:22	
School self-evaluation	No	Yes:14	
Individual evaluation by school principals	Yes	Yes:16	
Individual evaluation by peers	No	Yes:5	
Methods used to monitor the practice of teachers (2009) (15-year-olds)			
Source: OECD, 2010c			
% of students in schools where the principal reported that the following methods have been used the previous year to monitor the practice of teachers at their school			
Tests of assessments of student achievement	37.7	58.9	28/33
Teacher peer review (of lesson plans, assessment instruments, lessons)	79.7	56.8	9/33
Principal or senior staff observations of lessons	74.3	68.9	18/33
Observation of classes by inspectors or other persons external to the school	45.0	28.3	8/33
STUDENT ASSESSMENT			
The influence of test results on the school career of pupils (2008-09) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice (2009)			
ISCED 1/ ISCED 2			
Award of certificates	-	ISCED 1:2	ISCED 2:12
Streaming	-	ISCED 1:4	ISCED 2:2
Progression to the next stage of education	ISCED 1 & 2	ISCED 1:1	ISCED 2:2
No national tests, or no impact on progression	-	ISCED 1:29	ISCED 2:22
Completion requirements for upper secondary programmes Source: OECD, 2011⁸			
● Final examination / ■ Series of examinations during programme / Δ Specified number of course hours and examination / ♦ Specified number of course hours only			
ISCED 3A	● ■	●22 ■21 Δ20 ♦1	
ISCED 3B	a	●8 ■8 Δ7 ♦0	
ISCED 3C	● ■	●19 ■19 Δ18 ♦1	
Student grouping by ability (2009) (15-year-olds) Source: OECD, 2010c			
% of students in schools where principals reported the following practice within the school			
No ability grouping	35.4	31.9	13/33
Ability grouping for some subjects	35.0	55.2	28/33
Ability grouping for all subjects	29.6	12.9	5/33
Groups of influence on assessment practices (2009) (15-year-olds)			
Source: OECD, 2010c			
% of students in schools where the principal reported the following groups exert a direct influence on decision making about assessment practices			
Regional or national education authorities (e.g. inspectorates)	57.4	56.6	19/33
The school's governing board	18.8	29.5	21/33
Parent groups	33.3	17.3	6/33
Teacher groups (e.g. staff association, curriculum committees, trade union)	55.3	58.1	20/33
Student groups (e.g. student association, youth organisation)	46.4	22.7	6/33
External examination boards	12.1	42.4	29/31
Frequency of student assessment by method (2009) (15-year-olds)			
Source: (OECD, 2010c)			
% of students in schools where the principal reported the student assessment methods below are used with the indicated frequency			
Standardised tests			
Never	73.8	24.4	2/33
1-5 times a year	20.0	68.7	33/33
At least once a month	6.3	6.9	13/33
Teacher-developed tests			
Never	0.0	1.6	a
1-5 times a year	16.6	36.8	24/33

	Flemish Community	Inter- national bench- mark ²	Flemish Community's Rank ³
At least once a month	83.4	61.7	10/33
Teachers' judgemental ratings			
Never	0.6	5.7	23/33
1-5 times a year	19.2	35.4	25/33
At least once a month	80.2	58.8	9/33
Student portfolios			
Never	14.8	23.4	21/33
1-5 times a year	74.6	56.4	5/33
At least once a month	10.6	20.1	22/33
Student assignments/projects/homework			
Never	0.1	1.0	a
1-5 times a year	13.6	28.2	25/33
At least once a month	86.3	70.8	9/33
Use of student assessments (2009) (15-year-olds) Source: OECD, 2010c			
% students in schools where the principal reported that assessments of students are used for the following purposes			
To inform the parents about their child's progress	98.9	98.1	a
To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	98.3	77.8	4/33
To group students for instructional purposes	15.8	50.5	32/33
To compare the school to district or national performance	17.3	53.5	32/33
To monitor the school's progress from year to year	55.8	76.7	28/33
To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	35.5	47.5	21/33
To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	62.3	77.4	27/33
To compare the school with other schools	11.1	45.9	33/33
% of students repeating one or more grades according to their own report (2009) (15-year-olds) Source: OECD, 2010c	34.9	13.0	5/34
Level of school autonomy regarding the criteria for the internal assessment of pupils (2006-07) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice, 2008			
Full/Limited/No autonomy	Full	Full:24 Limited:10 No:0	
School decision-makers involved in determining the criteria for the internal assessment of pupils (2006-07) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice, 2008			
School responsibility involved	Yes	Yes:34	
School principal	No	Yes:0	
Teachers individually or collectively	No	Yes:13	
School management body	No	Yes:0	
Responsibilities vary depending on level of education	Yes	Yes:21	
School autonomy in preparing the content of examinations for certified qualifications (2006-07) (primary and lower secondary education) Source: Eurydice, 2008			
School responsibility involved/ examinations for certified qualifications exist	Yes	Yes:24 No:10	
Full/Limited/No autonomy	Full	Full:5 Limited:0 No:19	
School decision-makers who may be involved in preparing the content of examinations for certified qualifications (ISCED 2) (2006-07) Source: Eurydice, 2008			
School responsibility involved/ examinations for certified qualifications exist	Yes	Yes:5 No:29	
School principal	No	Yes:0	
Teachers individually or collectively	No	Yes:1	
School management body	No	Yes:0	
Responsibilities vary depending on level of education	Yes	Yes:4	

Notes for Tables E.1 and E.2

1. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is used to describe levels of education (and subcategories).

ISCED 1 - Primary education

Designed to provide a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics and a basic understanding of some other subjects. Entry age: between 5 and 7. Duration: 6 years.

ISCED 2 - Lower secondary education

Completes provision of basic education, usually in a more subject-oriented way with more specialist teachers. Entry follows 6 years of primary education; duration is 3 years. In some countries, the end of this level marks the end of compulsory education.

ISCED 3 - Upper secondary education

Even stronger subject specialisation than at lower-secondary level, with teachers usually more qualified. Students typically expected to have completed 9 years of education or lower secondary schooling before entry and are generally around the age of 15 or 16.

ISCED 3A - Upper secondary education type A

Prepares students for university-level education at level 5A

ISCED 3B - Upper secondary education type B

For entry to vocationally oriented tertiary education at level 5B

ISCED 3C - Upper secondary education type C

Prepares students for workforce or for post-secondary non tertiary education

ISCED 4 - Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Programmes at this level may be regarded nationally as part of upper secondary or post-secondary education, but in terms of international comparison their status is less clear cut. Programme content may not be much more advanced than in upper secondary, and is certainly lower than at tertiary level. Entry typically requires completion of an upper secondary programme. Duration usually equivalent to between 6 months and 2 years of full-time study.

ISCED 5 - Tertiary education

ISCED 5 is the first stage of tertiary education (the second – ISCED 6 – involves advanced research). At level 5, it is often more useful to distinguish between two subcategories: 5A, which represent longer and more theoretical programmes; and 5B, where programmes are shorter and more practically oriented. Note, though, that as tertiary education differs greatly between countries, the demarcation between these two subcategories is not always clear cut.

ISCED 5A - Tertiary-type A

“Long-stream” programmes that are theory based and aimed at preparing students for further research or to give access to highly skilled professions, such as medicine or architecture. Entry preceded by 13 years of education, students typically required to have completed upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education. Duration equivalent to at least 3 years of full-time study, but 4 is more usual.

ISCED 5B - Tertiary-type B

“Short-stream” programmes that are more practically oriented or focus on the skills needed for students to directly enter specific occupations. Entry preceded by 13 years of education; students may require mastery of specific subjects studied at levels 3B or 4A. Duration equivalent to at least 2 years of full-time study, but 3 is more usual.

2. The international benchmark column provides comparative information in one of two forms: country average (calculated as the simple average of all countries/systems for which data are available, as indicated in the Source Guide below); distribution of countries/systems by result category (typically by the categories “Yes” and “No”, but may also indicate the number of countries/systems in which a given criterion is used, *e.g.* for the indicator “Decision payments for teachers in public schools”, 29 countries use “Base salary”, 9 use “Additional yearly payment”, etc.). With the exception of data taken from the Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) and Eurydice publications (in the Source Guide: OECD, 2009; Eurydice, 2008; Eurydice, 2009), the benchmark is for OECD countries only.
3. “Flemish Community’s rank” indicates the position of the Flemish community of Belgium when countries are ranked in descending order from the highest to lowest value on the indicator concerned. For example, on the first indicator “Reading literacy”, the rank 6/35 indicates that the Flemish community of Belgium recorded the 6th highest value of the 35 countries/ systems for which data are available
4. National examinations are tests which have formal consequences for students.
5. “Compulsory tests” have to be taken by all students, regardless of the type of school attended, or by all students in public sector schools. “Optional tests” are taken under the authority of schools.

6. Austria, the Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland apply several tests at the national level each with a distinct number of subjects. Thus, for these countries no exact number of subjects tested can be provided.
7. “Highly structured” means that similar activities are completed at each school based on a specific set of data collection tools. “Unstructured” means that activities at each site vary and depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
8. For the Flemish community of Belgium the data refers to general education only.

Table E.3 OECD education systems with school self-evaluation requirements

	Frequency of school self-evaluations ¹	Extent to which they are structured ²	Level at which they are devised/ organised
Component of school inspections			
England	No requirements	Highly	Central
Korea	1 per 3 years	Highly	Provincial
Scotland	Annual	Highly	State
Czech Republic	Annual	Partially	School
France	Annual	Partially	Provincial
Iceland	Annual	Partially	Central
Israel	1+ per year	Partially	School; Central
Norway	Annual	Partially	Central
Poland	1+ per year	Partially	Central; School
Portugal	Annual	Partially	School
Slovak Republic	Annual	Partially	Central
Netherlands	No requirements	Unstructured	School
Sweden	Annual	Unstructured	School
Not a component of school inspections			
Denmark	1 per 3 years	Partially	Local
Estonia	Annual	Partially	School
Hungary	Annual	Partially	School
Japan	Annual	Unstructured	School
Germany	No requirements	m	m
No school inspections in system			
Finland	No requirements	Unstructured	Local

1. In public schools and government-dependent private schools (*i.e.* at least 50% of school core funding is from the government).
2. “Highly structured” means that similar activities are completed at each school based on a specific set of data collection tools. “Unstructured” means that activities at each site vary and depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Source: OECD, 2011.

Sources:

Eurydice (2008), *Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of Teachers in Europe*, Eurydice, Brussels.

Eurydice (2009), *National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results*, Eurydice, Brussels.

OECD (2009), *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2010a), *PISA 2009 Results: What Students Know and Can Do, Vol. I*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2010b), *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2010c), *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices, Vol. IV*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2011), *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

Data explanation:

- m Data are not available
a The category does not apply
~ Average is not comparable with other levels of education
= At least one other country has the same rank

Source Guide

Participation of countries by source

	TALIS (OECD, 2009)	Education at a Glance (OECD, 2010b)	PISA 2009 (OECD, 2010a; OECD, 2010c)	Eurydice (2008; 2009)	Education at a Glance (OECD, 2011)
OECD countries					
Australia	•	•	•		•
Austria	•	•	•	•	•
Belgium			•		
Flemish Community	•	•	•	•	•
French Community		•	•	•	•
German Community				•	
Canada		•	•		•
Chile		•	•		•
Czech Republic		•	•	•	•
Denmark	•	•	•	•	•
Estonia	•		•	•	•
Finland		•	•	•	•
France		•	•	•	•
Germany		•	•	•	•
Greece		•	•	•	•
Hungary	•	•	•	•	•
Iceland	•	•	•	•	•
Ireland	•	•	•	•	•
Israel			•		•
Italy	•	•	•	•	•
Japan		•	•		•
Korea	•	•	•		•
Luxembourg		•	•	•	•
Mexico	•	•	•		•
Netherlands		•	•	•	•
New Zealand		•	•		•
Norway	•	•	•	•	•
Poland	•	•	•	•	•
Portugal	•	•	•	•	•
Slovak Republic	•	•	•	•	•
Slovenia	•		•	•	
Spain	•	•	•	•	•
Sweden		•	•	•	•
Switzerland		•	•		•
Turkey	•	•	•		•
United Kingdom					
England		•	•	•	•
Northern Ireland		•	•	•	
Scotland		•	•	•	•
Wales		•	•	•	
United States		•	•		•
Other					
Brazil	•				
Bulgaria	•			•	
Latvia				•	
Lichtenstein				•	
Lithuania	•			•	
Malaysia	•				
Malta	•			•	
Romania				•	

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