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TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO IMPROVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS:
the golden duo for education reform

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TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO
IMPROVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS:
the golden duo for education reform

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VU / VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

Dear Rector, ladies and gentlemen
Over the years I have been asked many times about my fascination with inspection, accountability, assessment and evaluation. For many, these topics sound like dry, unexciting areas of work, more appropriate to a man in a grey, ill-fitting suit, obsessed with numbers and ledgers.

Introduction: Bronfenbrenner's model to understand change

When trying to explain my interest I would often return to my PhD research on school inspections here in the Netherlands, and particularly my case study work. In these case studies I shadowed inspectors of primary schools on their visits of schools to understand how they assessed schools and if and how their feedback led to improvement. I was testing the assumption that schools vary in their capacity and willingness to improve through inspections, and that school inspectors needed to vary their style of inspection to motivate change. The underlying theory to this hypothesis is grounded in *responsive regulation* which posits that regulators need to start with less coercive, less interventionist, and cheaper strategies to ensure compliant behaviour, and only move up the pyramid when these fail (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Responsive regulation
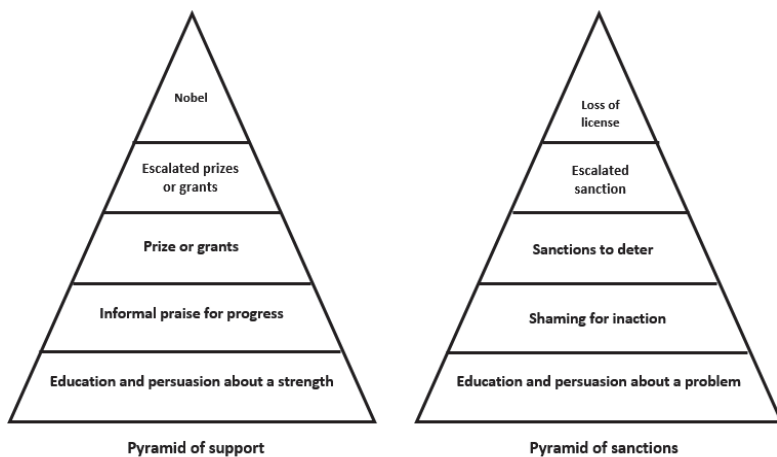
Source: Braithwaite[1]

Signalling to stakeholders the capacity to escalate to 'the tough stuff' higher up the pyramid is thought to motivate more cooperative problem solving at the base of the pyramid. Applied to school inspections in my PhD I assumed that schools with the capacity and willingness to improve would do so when visited by an inspector with a 'restrained' inspection style, while schools with no capacity or willingness to improve would require a more directive style of inspection. The

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[1] http://regnet.anu.edu.au/news-events/podcasts/video/314/john-braithwaite-limits-responsive-regulation

assumption was rejected as I didn't find any differences in effects between the two types of inspectors and schools, but the visits did lead to various insights which still inspire my work today.

One of the observations and sources of inspiration during those visits was the vast differences in how teachers and head teachers would communicate with inspectors and how these inspectors would interact with schools. One case I remember vividly was of a Christian orthodox school on the 'bible belt', a strip of land in the Netherlands with the highest concentration of conservative orthodox Calvinist Protestants in the country.

The inspector, a middle aged white man, dressed in a three piece suit and me in a long black skirt visited the school over two beautiful autumn days. The school day started with church hymns played by a teacher on the school's organ. This sober music greeted us that morning as did the school with its quiet and safe atmosphere where discipline and time on task contributed to an effective learning environment and high learning standards. During the visit, the inspector had frequent conversations with the head teacher about aspects of teaching that could be improved and specific teachers who needed further professional development and support. Although these conversations were all informal and pleasant, there was an undertone of great unease on both sides that I could only explain towards the end of the visit. After our final feedback meeting with the school staff, the inspector confided in me to say that he had rather not inspected this school given that he was gay; he had clearly struggled with the frequent references of school staff to marriage between a man and a woman being a divine institution.

When I returned to the school for further interviews I asked the head teacher about the visit and whether the school had used the feedback from the inspector in any way. They explained how they had respectfully discussed the feedback but had come to the conclusion that the inspector had not really understood their values and school mission. Apart from a small number of minor changes, most of the feedback on such important aspects of pedagogy as differentiating teaching for pupils with varying levels of capability and achievement was ignored. In the school's view, the inspector did not have the legitimacy to advise them on their instructional practices, and the accountability framework did not provide the incentives or stakes needed to enforce change.

What this story highlights is not just why the research on inspection and accountability is so fascinating, but also that it is not about numbers and facts but about relations and interactions between people and how they collaborate, or fail to collaborate to improve teaching and learning. When we try to understand how schools function or how to improve education systems, we need to think about how policies and interventions affect teachers and head teachers in schools, their pupils, parents and other professionals working with schools, and particularly how they are held to account and engage with external accountability. This has been at the forefront of my research the last two decades and I'd like to share some of the highlights with you here. I will use Bronfenbrenner's model of human development, depicted here, to guide us through as his ecological perspective on development and change offers a structured framework to understand how context affects learning and change.

Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory of human development
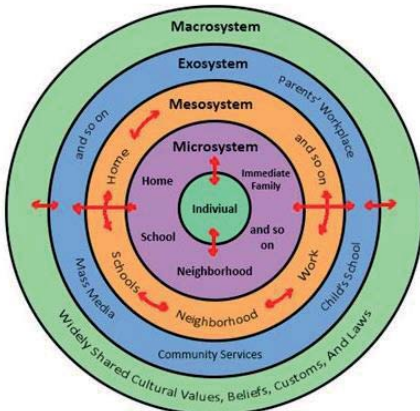
Bronfenbrenner's model applied to education systems

Bronfenbrenner pictures the learning of an individual at the heart of his model (figure 1), resulting from an interaction of processes, person, and context. The model shows that developmental processes and outcomes vary as a joint function of the characteristics of the person as well as the environment, and how these also change over the course of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p. 200). The model has been adapted by various colleagues to understand education system change, such as by Snyder (2013), Johnson (2008) and Godfrey and Brown (2018) who have taken the development and learning of the school organisation as a starting point. They describe how organisational developmental processes (e.g., teaching and learning) and outcomes (e.g. student achievement) vary as a joint function of the characteristics of the school and of the ecological systems or environment surrounding the school. Let me explain each of the circles in the model and how the model provides a lens through which we can understand the functioning of education systems.

The first circle is the microsystem which constitutes the interactions at the interpersonal level, such as the actions and interactions of school leaders, teachers, staff, parents, governors and students. The microsystem is the system closest to the developing person and the one in which they have direct contact. A microsystem of a child typically includes family, peers, or caregivers, and, in a school setting his/her teacher(s), other adults working in the school and his/her peers. Extending the theory to the development and learning of adults in a school setting situates teachers, head teachers and even policy-makers in the microsystem and how they interact with and learn from others (colleagues, peers, employees, employers, stakeholders).

Bronfenbrenner emphasizes the bi-directionality of these relationships and how someone's reactions to the people in his/her microsystem will affect how they treat you in return. This is the most influential level of the ecological systems theory, according to Härkönen (2005). When we

try to understand school and system reform, we need to look at how such reforms have an effect on the interactions of students and their teachers, but also how teachers learn about the reform, make sense of whether and how to improve their teaching by trying out new approaches in their classroom. How students respond will in turn shape teachers' learning and development and implementation of reform as students' responses confirm or reject their initial beliefs about the value of the reform for their specific group of students. As a teacher I'm more inclined to continue using a new instructional approach if my students understand certain subject matter better than before.

The next layer is the mesosystem which consists of the interactions between the different parts of a person's microsystem, such as the relationship between the students' parents and his/her teacher. When parents take an active role in their child's school career, such as by attending parent/teacher conferences, volunteering in his/her classroom and supporting their child with homework, this can have a positive influence on the child's development.
The positive effect of a positively interconnected mesosystem also applies to the learning of, for example, teachers and principals in a school where bidirectional interactions between groups of teachers and students or school staff and parents shape the organisational culture of the school, and opportunities to discuss the quality of the work, and thereby influence the learning of those involved and the improvement of the school.

The third circle, or exosystem in Bronfenbrenner's model is the external environment of which individuals are part and which exerts influence upon them, such as government policies, networks or other organisations that connect to the school. Decisions made in the exosystem will have bearing on the person, even though he or she has no participation in the decision-making process. An example would be a child being affected by a parent receiving a promotion at work or losing their job. If we take teachers and head teachers as the unit of analysis, examples are government policies on education, restraints on public spending, parental demands for choice, or local economic conditions that affect their work and shape their opportunities to learn and develop (Johnson, 2008). Commonplace in many nations' education policies has been the promotion of school-led improvement, coupled with the encouragement of new types of networks of schools, according to Greany and Higham (2018). Such policies emphasise horizontal connections in the ecosystem, specifically at the meso- and exo-levels, through school-to-school collaboration or teachers and school leaders working across schools (Godfrey and Brown, 2018); these connections will create new relationships and opportunities for learning.

The macrosystem depicted as the fourth circle can be thought of as the "social blueprint" of a given culture, subculture, or broad social context and consists of the overarching pattern of values, belief systems, lifestyles, opportunities, customs, and resources embedded therein (Johnson, 2008). This system is generally considered to exert a unidirectional influence upon not only the person but also his/her micro-, meso-, and exosystem. A child, his or her parent, a teacher, head teacher and his or her school are all part of a larger cultural context where members of a cultural group share a common identity, heritage, and values, such as on the purpose of education and reform, and the underlying cultural blueprint in which the system exists. Students or teachers (the individual we expect to learn and develop) will be affected by this context as and when it permeates his/her (opportunities for) interactions with others, access to resources etc. In England for example the neo-liberal economic and political agenda and appreciation for academic performance targets,

school choice and competition has dominated the reform agenda and has affected how students and school staff interact.

A final dimension is time as the interactions depicted in the model are not static but will change over time. Bronfenbrenner's work particularly refers to age-related developmental processes of individuals, but wider sociohistorical circumstances are also relevant to understand how and why reforms are implemented in schools. Teachers' experience and number of years working in the school will likely affect their capacity to for example teach new instructional content. Recently qualified teachers often have their hands full with classroom and behavioural management. Also, a school's organisational dimensions will change over time in ways that affect a school staff's and students' learning and development. Johnson (2008) for example refers to the day-to-day and year-to-year developmental changes that occur in a school's student body, teaching staff, curricular choices, and the overall number of years a school is in operation. Newer schools face challenges and opportunities that differ from those of a school that has been in operation for a length of time and this will affect opportunities of staff working in the school to learn and develop. Bronfenbrenner refers to time as the 'chronosystem' and these patterning of events and transitions over the life course influences the operation of all levels of the ecological system (Johnson, 2008).

These brief examples highlight how, even though Bronfenbrenner developed his model to understand human development, the ecological perspective provides a relevant lens through which to understand education systems as a set of nested structures where the higher and lower levels mutually influence and shape each other. Any change, disturbance or action that occurs at any level can have an effect on other parts of the ecosystem, including laterally and upwards. Recognizing and understanding these mutual relationships is indispensable for a holistic comprehension of the essence of education systems and how we can understand improvement of schools and learning outcomes.

Understanding school and system improvement, and particularly the role of accountability in such improvement has underpinned my work over the years. In my research I've chosen a comparative and realist approach to find answers about why, how and under what conditions various models of accountability are or are not effective. How do people and organisations hold each other accountable for the quality and outcomes of their work? Which 'interventions' such as internal school-evaluation, peer review, inspections or standardized testing are used in these accountability relations and if, and how do they improve education? Why are some schools and systems more effective than others and which mechanisms explain these differences? Bronfenbrenner's model allows us to structure our thinking and answer some of these questions, acknowledging the fact that countries, and even regions and cities within countries, vary in how they coordinate school improvement and how accountability is conceptualized and implemented as part of this mix. Let me explain and illustrate the model by offering two examples of the countries I know best: England and the Netherlands.

Exo and macrosystem
These two countries are also particularly interesting as they have a similar model of accountability with high stakes testing and school inspections, but they vary substantially in how the education system (Bronfenbrenner's exo and macrosystem) is coordinated and governed with a distinct mix of market, hierarchy and network.

Box 1. Three modes of coordination:
- Hierarchy: tightly managed from the centre with strong, top-down control of recruitment, promotion, curriculum and content of classroom instruction
- Market: independent relations between 'buyer' and 'seller', coordination through price and competition
- Networks: collaboration between interdependent actors; joint decision-making based on interdependency, trust, and empathy

These three are well-known modes of governance of education systems, described for example by Windzio et al (2005) and Greany and Higham (2018), where each has its distinct structure in institutions and actor constellations (e.g state and/or non-state), and a unique process or mode of social coordination by which actors engage in rulemaking and implementation and in the provision of education.

Hierarchies are for example based on authority, clear division of tasks, rules, rationality and objectivity were the state is in charge of regulating school quality. It does so by setting standards on for example curriculum and assessment and typically enforces these through school inspections. In marketized systems, parents typically have free school choice and funding mechanisms aim to encourage schools to compete for pupils. Inspection reports and league tables are expected to inform parents' decision-making process.
Network governance, which emerged in the 1990s has trust and empathy as the organizing principles where school-to-school collaboration is seen as a viable strategy for improvement or where community-based partnerships between schools and other service providers are expected to provide for more inclusive education or to address high inequality in the education system.

In both England and the Netherlands we find a combination of all three approaches to co-ordinating the school system, but here I'd like to focus on the dominant logic in both countries and how this is informing student learning in the microsystem as conceptualized in Bronfenbrenner's model. In England, the dominant logic is one of the (quasi)market. I add 'quasi' here on purpose because no education system will be a pure market: there are too many constraints for supply and demand to only be matched on the basis of monetary incentives. In England, choice and competition are however considered to be important drivers for high educational quality and dominant paradigms of reform.

The most recent example of this logic is the introduction of academies in 2000. Academies were introduced to improve pupil performance and 'break the cycle of low expectations' which was believed to be caused by the local authorities in charge of these schools[2]. Although these schools are state-funded, they have freedom over finance, staffing, the curriculum and admissions of students, and are independent of local authority control. Private and third-sector providers are encouraged to govern these schools and to run a portfolio of schools in a more business-like manner. As the UK Department for Education specifies in one of its white papers: they are expected 'to improve standards and increase financial efficiencies and sustainability' (DfE, 2016b: 8) and are expected to be better equipped to do so than local authorities. Interestingly, the valuing

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[2] Carvel, John (15 March 2000). "Blunkett plans network of city academies". *The Guardian*. Archived from the original on 4 May 2014. Retrieved 4 May 2014.

of competition and enterprise as a driver for improvement is one that is surprisingly held across the political spectrum in England and not just by the conservative party. It was Labour prime minister Tony Blair who, in 2005 drastically changed the role of Local Education Authorities in running schools, emphasising that[3]:

 '(...) schools will be accountable not to government at the centre or locally, but to parents, with the creativity and <u>enterprise</u> of the teachers and school leaders set free."
'"Where parents are dissatisfied, they need a range of good schools to choose from; or where there is no such choice, [to be] able to take the remedy into their own hands. Where business, the voluntary sector, philanthropy, which in every other field is an increasing part of our national life, want to play a key role in education, and schools want them to, they can.'

How much of this type of market thinking do we find in the Netherlands?

The Dutch education system is, on the surface, quite similar to the English system. Here, schools also have high autonomy, parents have freedom of school choice and school choice is often promoted by the government as a way to increase competition in the school system. When Trouw published a league table of secondary schools in 1997, the newspaper sold out within hours[4]. However, referring back to Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem, the values underpinning school autonomy and choice in the Netherlands are also (or perhaps even more so) about the freedom of education than competition, although the one does not rule out the other. In the Netherlands the freedom of education is a constitutional right guaranteed under Article 23 of the Constitution, which ended the state monopoly in education and allows anyone to establish a school, determine the principles on which the school is based, and organize classroom teaching. As a study by Karsten in 1999 shows, there was never much interest to introduce market-type mechanisms in education in the Netherlands in the past, while, in the 1990s up until today there seems much more concern about inequality of opportunity in education. The annual report of the Dutch Inspectorate in 2016 and 2017[5] and subsequent headlines in the press about rising inequality suggest that this continues to be a concern and the increasing competition between schools is criticized in this respect, instead of welcomed as a mechanism for improvement.

In the Netherlands, the dominant logic is not one of the market but one of network governance, as a study by Hooge, Waslander and Theisens (2017) visualizes:

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[3] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/matthewd_ancona/7840664/Michael-Gove-has-a-precious-chance-to-save-our-schools-from-the-state.html
[4] https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/1997/10/30/scholen-bij-nader-inzien-enthousiast-over-cijferlijst-7373978-a997640
[5] https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/onacceptabele-ongelijkheid-opleiding-ouders-steeds-bepalender-voor-schoolsucces~b1bb5fd1/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.nl%2F

Figure 3. Steering network dynamics in the Dutch education system (citizenship education in VET)
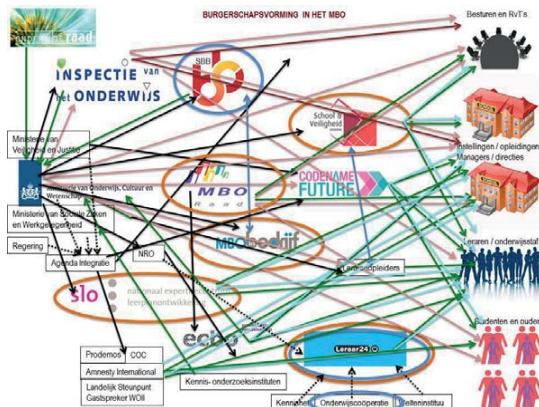
Source: NRC, 20 june 2017[6]

This graphic representation of stakeholders in secondary education shows how the Dutch system has a large number of organisations and institutions that operate between the level of school boards and that of national government (Hooge, 2013). There are different steering networks for every combination of sector and policy issue. In the introduction of civic competences, Hooge and colleagues identified for example at least 10-15 actors at the intermediate administrative level engaging in policymaking in ways that affect school boards' autonomy and discretion to govern their schools. The Ministry of Education is one of the partners in this network and actively engages these organisations[7] in their steering of the system. They do so through a set of agreements, such as the National Education 'Convenant', introduced in 2013, between the Minister of Education and various organisations. The agreement sets out an improvement agenda for all education sectors by 2020[8]. Rather than competition and choice, negotiation and collaboration are part of the social blueprint of the Dutch education system and inspired by our well-known 'Polder model': a consensus-based model of decision-making which was initiated in 1982, when unions, employers, and government decided on a comprehensive plan to revitalise the economy.

One of the underlying values of such national agreements are the value of having a good education, not just for individual economic benefits but also for society at large which is believed to prosper with a highly educated population. The state is viewed as a trusted partner to ensure everyone's

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[6] https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/06/20/leraar-overbelast-door-sectorraden-platforms-advies-a1563754

[7] independent administrative bodies with policy responsibilities or administrative tasks in education, regional administrative authorities, municipalities, councils and sector organisations (representing employers in education), trade unions (representing employees in education), (associations of) occupational groups in education, consultancy and support organisations, process and project management organisations, platforms, think tanks and knowledge centres

[8] the cross sectoral representative umbrella organisation for sector-wide educational boards – the Association of Education, a joint initiative of the Sector Councils for primary education, secondary education, vocational education, higher professional education and universities - and additionally employer and employee organisations

access to a high quality education and does so in the Netherlands through a networked approach, instead of in the Anglo-Saxon model where the onus is on the individual and quasi-market forces. In England, the 'Nanny state' is a common reference to criticize national government for interfering in people's lives.

To understand such a lack of enthusiasm for state interference in education in England, I turn to one of my distinguished English colleagues, Ron Glatter who explains England's emphasis on school autonomy and appreciation for market forces by the country's unique experience and history of independent education. He argues that, 'although only 7% of the population attend independent schools such as Eton, Westminster and St Paul's, well over half of many professionals in positions of power have done so. 2009 data from the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions shows that 75% of judges, 70% of finance directors, 45% of top civil servants, and 32% of MPs [Members of Parliament] were independently schooled'. It is these professionals who are likely to decide on key educational policies while their successes reinforce the view that it's this type of private education that will get you into the top jobs. A good education will provide you with the networks and social capital to do well in life and the value of education is particularly to improve one's personal and national competitiveness in a global economy (Greany and Earley, 2016), rather than valuing education because it contributes to a robust democracy, offers the chance of personal fulfilment or the advancement of knowledge.

Accountability often overrules coordination of quality and reform
It is these differences in the social blueprint of a country, and how a country coordinates educational quality and improvement (Bronfenbrenner's macro and exosystem) which structure and constrain the work of teachers and head teachers in the meso and the microsystem; in England the logic of the market and in the Netherlands the logic of network governance.

However, it is not just the coordination upfront which regulates and shapes their work, but also, or perhaps even more so how they are held accountable for the quality and outcomes of their work. Here is where my work of the past years comes in and particularly one key lesson: 'what gets measured, gets done'. Even if we are only measuring for reasons of transparency. This brings me to the second part of my talk in which I will explain how external accountability often overrules the policies and reforms implemented to coordinate school quality and improvement. One of the key studies in my career which exemplifies this was an EU-funded study of eight countries which showed us how the pressure to conform to inspection standards, and the perceived legitimacy of these standards to improve education creates a culture of constant monitoring and performativity where the inspection standards dominate the development of routines, structures, positions and tools in schools. Despite the logic of autonomy and free school choice in both England and the Netherlands, a focus on high student outcomes in academic subjects and approaches which are thought to be 'inspection-approved' prevailed. The perceived high pressure to confirm to inspection standards overruled the logic of the market and network where schools and teachers were expected to have professional discretion over their curriculum and develop an offer and instructional approach which meets the needs and interests of the local community (see table 1).

Table 1. Principals feeling pressure to do well on inspection standards in six European countries

| Country	I feel pressure to do well on the inspection standards					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
ENG	1.7%	0.0%	3.0%	32.8%	62.8%	4.54	.717
NL	2.2%	0.0%	8.9%	66.7%	22.2%	4.07	.720
SE	2.5%	4.2%	15.5%	54.6%	23.1%	3.92	.882
IE	4.1%	20.7%	18.2%	38.8%	18.2%	3.46	1.133
CZ	8.9%	6.7%	35.6%	44.4%	4.4%	3.29	.991
CH	14.5%	16.1%	25.8%	38.7%	4.8%	3.03	1.159
AT	14.1%	22.1%	32.2%	27.4%	4.0%	2.85	1.097
Total	*6.4%*	*10.2%*	*18.6%*	*40.8%*	*23.9%*	*3.66*	*1.137*

N=1169; n(IE)=121; n(ENG)=235; n(NL)=45; n(CZ)=45; n(AT)=298; n(SE)=355; n(CH)=62; chi^2=479.468, df=24, p=.000

1…strongly disagree, 2…disagree, 3…neither agree nor disagree, 4…agree, 5…strongly agree
Source: Altrichter and Kemethofer, 2014

In both England and the Netherlands (see figure 4), the high pressure of external inspections caused teachers to align the school's curriculum, school organisation and teaching to inspection standards, to narrow the curriculum to what was tested (i.e. reading, writing and mathematics) and to coach their students to do well on the high stakes test.

Figure 4. Narrowing of curriculum and instruction from inspections in six European countries

Q47. School inspections have resulted in narrowing curriculum and instructional strategies in my school
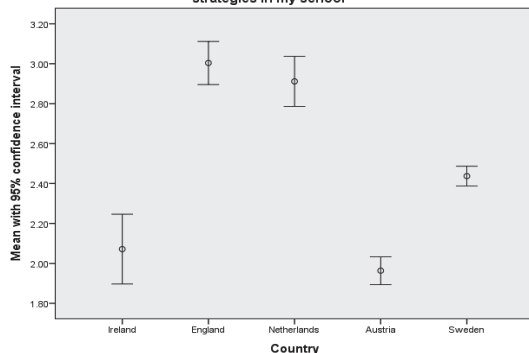
This process is exacerbated by the external environment of the school, such as publishers, homework institutes and various online platforms which offer and promote various resources of for example a 'perfect Ofsted lesson. The example in figure 5, although from 2011, is illustrative in this context; it lists the six basic requirements every 'outstanding Ofsted lesson' should incorporate according to this source in the Times Education Supplement: a surprise, a purpose, an

investigative activity, differentiation, evaluation of the learning and a recording and reflection of the learning. This, and similar examples, have become so prominent in England that Ofsted, the English Inspectorate of Education initiated a 'myth busting campaign' to clarify the practices it requires and those it particularly does not.

Figure 5. The perfect Ofsted lesson[9]
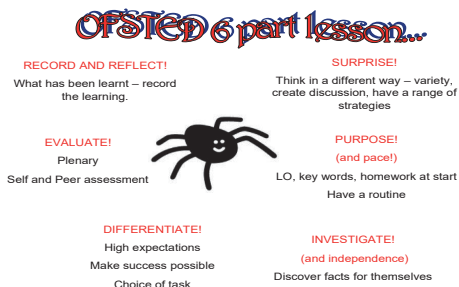
In both England and the Netherlands, the pressure to do well in inspections is thus not just coming from the inspection, but also from other actors in the system acting on inspection and test outcomes. Various qualitative studies (Perryman, 2006; Chapman, 2001; Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen, 2012) talk about how English schools in special measures struggle to recruit teachers and head teachers, how going into special measures is essentially a 'career killer' for a head teacher and how the naming and shaming from inspection judgements and league tables creates a culture of fear and pre-occupation to get a good or outstanding judgement. Having a banner of 'outstanding' on the school gate matters to attract students and good teachers and English schools use these banners to brand their school.

In our EU study we called this phenomenon 'setting expectations' and found that this was a key mechanism for change across the countries in our study. The mechanism is well-known from neo-institutional theories which explain how standards, such as those in inspection frameworks present and create socially acceptable definitions of quality and have for example created a shared view that reading, writing and arithmetic and mathematics are basic skills for everyone in Western societies and that these need to be taught in age-based classrooms in schools. Neo-institutional theory explains how accountability standards travel through the subsystems in Bronfenbrenner's model and, when doing so, create homogeneity in structure and culture in schools.

Accountability standards and coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism
This brings me to the third part of my lecture, where I will focus on the mechanisms of change, and *how and why* accountability standards do, or do not improve education. Following the previous examples, I will explain how accountability standards inform a process whereby organisations tend

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[9] https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/planning-and-teaching-the-perfect-ofsted-lesson-6113548

to become increasingly alike, even though we coordinate for variety, choice and freedom of education.

This process is called 'isomorphism' and first posited by Weber, and later DiMaggio and Powell (1983) who very aptly refer to an 'iron cage' and three mechanisms by which variety and diversity is ruled out: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism.

I already alluded to the first type of coercive isomorphism as described by Dimaggio and Powell when describing the pressure (both formal and informal) exerted on teachers and head teacher to confirm to inspection standards in a certain manner. Formal pressure would come from the sanctions imposed after a failing inspection, such as increased monitoring or a written notice to improve, while informal pressures are exerted by other organizations upon which schools are dependent and by the cultural expectations in the society within which schools function. Pressure may be felt as force or as persuasion, or what Dimaggio and Powell (1983) refer to as 'as an invitation to join in collusion'; if your neighbouring school has an Ofsted banner on the school gate, you feel you need to have one as well, particularly when parents start asking for your inspection outcome. In a study with Marlies Honingh and Cor van Montfort we also found this effect in the Netherlands where schools talk about how their reputation in the local community is informed by their most recent inspection report.

Inspections also have an important role in augmenting what Dimaggio and Powell refer to as mimetic processes: schools model themselves after other schools they perceive to be more legitimate or successful. They will for example copy behavioural policy, data systems or school self-evaluation protocols from schools that have received a good or outstanding inspection, legitimizing these practices as high quality. Schools will particularly mimic other schools when they are unsure about how to establish high achievement of their students (particularly of disadvantaged students) and when their search for potential effective practices leads them onto seemingly viable solutions that can be implemented with little expense. Inspections have an important role in augmenting such processes. Their publication of good practices, league tables of high performing and failing schools and benchmarking schools on common indicators of 'good educational practices' and outcomes allows schools to find such examples. The 'Edubusiness' or educational field of textbook developers, support organisations etcetera typically reinforces this process by selling and marketing products that are 'inspection-approved' and aligning their products and services to inspection frameworks, or by distributing the example I just showed of 'the perfect Ofsted lesson'.

A third and final source of isomorphic change is normative pressure, according to Dimaggio and Powell (1983). Normative pressure stems primarily from professionalization where members of an occupation collectively define the conditions and methods of their work, how people enter the occupation (e.g. setting requirements on qualification for new entrants), and where they establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy. Particularly the formal education of teachers, and the growth and elaboration of professional networks that span schools are important sources of isomorphism, such as when teacher training institutions convey clear norms about what good teaching or an effective school looks like and, in doing so, create a set of common expectations among teachers. The result is a teaching corps which tends to have a similar understanding of policies and practices that are legitimate, and view problems in a similar fashion.

Professional networks, such as those of the Dutch council for primary and secondary education, also allow new models and practices to diffuse rapidly, and to create a shared understanding of teachers and head teachers. These models of successful practices are often informed by inspection standards and frameworks and are diffused unintentionally and indirectly when teachers and head teachers move between schools.

In England, normative pressures are explicitly organized by Ofsted in training head teachers on the inspection framework and including them in inspection teams of other peer schools. These head teachers learn about how to interpret inspection categories and the kind of practices an inspector would want to see and they take that knowledge back to their school. Over time the standards become the established way of how things are done and influence the type of improvement and effects generated, precluding future options for behavioural change, including those that would perhaps have been more effective in the long run. Wilkins (2011), Dougill et al (2011) and Berry (2012) explain how new young teachers in England will themselves have been educated in a system in which pupils were frequently tested and schools were required to meet externally- imposed standards and are regularly inspected. 'It is all they have known so they don't imagine it can be different' (Berry, 2012, p.402). Teachers who express different views, for example of the importance of individual teacher autonomy, are now considered out of date or incompetent (Hall and Noyes, 2007).

These established ideas of the way things are done can be very beneficial as they guide action and predict the behaviour of others. They create a sense of security and alignment in the system which for example eases the transition of students between schools and school phases and they allow teachers to take up a post in another school with relative ease. Such alignment and isomorphism from accountability standards is however not necessarily effective as I previously explained as standardization can lead to a narrow curriculum focused on tested subjects and can stifle innovation. This brings me to the last part of my lecture and a more forward-looking perspective of how we can come to what is often referred to as 'intelligent accountability' and the role of trust in reducing the unintended consequences from external accountability.

Intelligent accountability and trust: three perspectives

'Intelligent accountability' is not a new concept but has recently gained traction again with Onora O'Neill's Reith lecture and ted talk in 2013. She and others (e.g. Crooks, 2003) describe intelligent accountability as a system which preserves and enhances trust among key participants. When we apply this to education, we expect trust to act as a lubricant in accountability relations, such as those between a head teacher and an inspector when discussing the quality of the school, or between a head teacher who performance manages his/her teacher. In such relations, trust would allow for more flexible monitoring and evaluation with open norms, instead of through very detailed indicators and protocols which tend to become very prescriptive. The argument goes something like this: …

If, as a head teacher, I trust the Inspectorate of Education to be able to evaluate the quality of my school and to have the best interest of my staff and students at heart, I'm going to be fine with them using a set of heuristics in their inspection. If I however do not trust them, I will want to see exactly what criteria they will be using and how these are going to be used. A similar argument can be put forward for the relation between teacher and head teacher.

This example indicates how a certain level of trust would, or can, inform various levels or forms of accountability. This is however only one perspective on the relationship between trust and accountability and one that has not been studied yet, particularly not in an education context. For further work in this area we therefore have to turn to the field of organisational management which offers a vast body of work on trust and control in cooperative exchange relationships. In this field, trust and control are viewed as two distinct modes to govern an exchange relationship, such as between a buyer and a supplier or an employer and employee, describing the combinations of trust and verification which enhance or detract exchange performance.

In this field, trust is described as the expectation that an exchange partner will not behave opportunistically, even when such behaviour cannot be detected by the victim. An example of such opportunistic behaviour in a buyer-supplier relationship would be of a car dealer who would sell you a new car with second hand inferior parts where you wouldn't be able to know that you are being conned (at least I wouldn't know). In a school setting, examples of opportunistic behaviour are where teachers are paid to teach a certain number of hours by their school board or national government but show up late for work and their board or government is unable to know without some form of monitoring. They are taking a leap of faith when paying the teacher, assuming he or she can be trusted to do a good job. In a context where the 'supplier' or contracted partner cannot be trusted, control or monitoring is needed to ensure that he/she does not engage in opportunistic behaviour. However, when the contracted partner *can* be trusted, control and monitoring become redundant and induce costs on the transaction; someone has to pay for it. Also, the organisational management literature shows that introducing control and monitoring in a relationship where both actors are honest and committed to meeting agreements, the monitoring can actually reduce, or crowd out, trust (McEvily et al, 2003; Gundlach and Cannon, 2010). Future work on accountability, particularly in an education context which is far more complex than just the delivery of a positional good, needs to further explore the relation between trust and control and what 'intelligent accountability' entails and whether it is at all possible. Let me conclude by introducing the three perspectives offered by the field of organisational management and how we can use these to further the debate.

The first complementary perspective positions trust and control as complements which can reinforce one another and lead to better, and a broader set of performance outcomes (Barrera et al, 2015; Mills and Rubinstein Reiss, 2017; Näslund and Hallström, 2017). This perspective contends that governance of exchange relations may be crafted with multiple mechanisms that address different governance problems. In this perspective, the information gathered on someone's performance may for example confirm initial (positive) assumptions of someone's (perceived) trustworthiness and enhance the collaboration and trust between partners. Monitoring and control can also provide information that both partners can use to improve their exchange.

In a school setting, a head teacher who performance manages his/her teachers would come to trust these teachers when these performance reviews confirm that teachers are doing a good job and are trying to teach well. Teachers would equally come to trust their head teacher when they feel they are treated fairly and just and understand the performance management to be implemented in an attempt to help them improve their work. In this case, the control and monitoring by the head teacher and teachers being accountable to their head teacher can promote trust and ensure that it becomes an established feature of the relationship. Formal control may thus promote trust when

those being regulated perceive the monitoring and sanction / reward process as a sign of good intentions and benevolence on the part of the regulator and when they interpret the monitoring as a signal of interest and credible concern.

The second substitution perspective positions trust and control as two separate governance mechanisms: you either transact on the basis of trust, or on the basis of contractual agreements and verification. In this view, control mechanisms are viewed as redundant and inefficient when there is trust between partners. The higher transaction cost of control and monitoring are seen to lower performance, particularly when measured in terms of efficiency (Williamson 1991; Granovetter, 1985). Trust reduces the need for effortful monitoring and frequent reanalysis of a situation or relationship as it enables people to make intuitive judgements and evaluations on the basis of one or a few simpler rules or cues (Lewicki and Brinsfield, 2015; Ostrom, 2010).

The head teacher in our example would not need to performance manage his staff through a formal process of annual reviews if there is sufficient trust that would allow him to regularly observe his/her teachers, offer feedback on the quality of lessons and monitor in a more informal manner. More formal monitoring, in this perspective, would be viewed as unnecessary and costly when there is a setting of high trust and clear goal commitment. Colleagues Brown, O'Hara and McNamara's findings in our second EU-study on inspections of educational networks has for example shown how high trust in the district inspector in West Belfast allowed him to join and contribute to working groups of schools and offer evaluative information and feedback on an ongoing basis.

The use of monitoring and control can however also crowd out trust in the sense that the level of trust in the relationship is eroded when control and monitoring are introduced. Control is thought to reduce the level of trust in the relationship when partners in a relationship attribute the collaborative behaviour to the existence of control and monitoring, instead of innate behaviours and values on which trust would be based. In our example of performance management in a school, the head teacher would believe that teachers are only doing a good job *because* they are performance managed instead of out of intrinsic interest and concern for students' learning and the quality of the school. The initial starting position matters here as control, when introduced into a distrustful relationship seems to escalate distrust, while the literature on external and internal motivation also indicates that external incentives to perform well may crowd out internal motives.

Those who argue for this inverse perspective (Gundlach and Cannon, 2010; Williamson; 1991) would state that control violates the underpinning principle of trust and that you cannot control someone you trust. These colleagues would argue that control stems from a position of distrust (Macaulay, 1963). If one is not trusted, one trusts less, leading to a lower level of trust in the relationship (Enzle & Anderson, 1993). In a study in South Africa with Andrew Paterson and Jacqueline Baxter we see clear examples of control and monitoring reducing trust, particularly when teachers and head teachers are held accountable to standards they can't meet without additional capacity and support and where the understanding of 'accountability' in some schools also triggers an understanding of subjugation and compliance as that is how inspections were used in the Apartheid regime.

This particular example brings us back to Bronfenbrenner's model and the social blueprint of a country and of the education system in which teachers and head teachers work. Their understanding of accountability pre-empts their engagement with, or passive or active resistance to external standards, and how the accountability system can or cannot operate to affect change. The example again explains that context is important, also in how trust and control will interact and which perspective we will find in any kind of system.

The example also offers a somewhat sobering message in that there is no single type of 'intelligent' accountability system. Rather, intelligent accountability systems which improve the quality of teaching and learning vary according to context and the prevailing structure and culture of the system in which educators work and students learn. So we have come full circle and are back where we started the lecture: interactions between people matter, and moving to more 'intelligent' systems and accountability interventions requires an understanding of how this influences educators in a specific context, given their historic context, existing levels of trust and areas for improvement.

Closing remarks

I look forward to furthering our knowledge in this area, and making it accessible to those who are trying to improve our education systems. Working with practitioners and academic colleagues is one of the great pleasures of this role and what I'm hoping to continue doing over the next years. I sincerely express my gratitude to the Executive Board of the university and to the Board of the Faculty, as well as the funders of my research for offering me the opportunity to do so.

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