Professional Autonomy, Accountability and Efficient Leadership

and the role of employers' organisations, trade unions and school leaders

Secondary Education Council of the Netherlands (VO-raad)
European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)
European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)

February 2015

Final report

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VO RAAD

EFEE THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF EDUCATION EMPLOYERS

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AOb·Algemene Onderwijsbond

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Local Government Association

Foreword EFEE and ETUCE

Strong and effective leadership is important in European schools of the 21st century. Strong and effective leadership is a key force for educational changes necessary for a modern European education system that is able to face social and economic challenges like growth, competitiveness and social cohesion.

School leaders are an important stakeholder group for both the education employers' organisations and teacher trade unions. They are the link between school management and teachers, between different levels of education and training, families, the local community and the labour market. School leaders also have a crucial responsibility in ensuring the creation of a safe and conducive environment for teaching and learning and student success.

Moreover, as international studies show, school leaders are expected to play a key role in the maintenance and improvement of educational quality (McKinsey, 2010). Therefore, the increased recognition of the responsibility of school leaders for school quality and performance (i.e. student attainment and teacher performance) were important starting points for our research and our Peer Learning Activities as presented in this report.

During our Peer Learning Visits, by exchanging best practices and experiences, it became clear that the dialogue between and among teachers and school leaders, between trade unions and employers, between schools and their direct community is of upmost importance in guaranteeing strong school leadership, in enhancing mutual trust and good-will in striving for education quality.

The European Social Partners in education wish to stress that the issue of high quality and effective school leadership is a priority for their members. Including the national social partners in education but certainly also at local and regional levels.

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We therefore hope that this work on "Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient school leadership", will contribute to the awareness of educational employers and teacher trade unions on their role in enhancing the effectiveness and accountable autonomy of education institutions and school leaders.

Both EFEE and ETUCE are committed to continuing to actively promote this tangible outcome of the work of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education.

January 2015

Bianka Stege, General Secretary of EFEE & Martin Rømer, European Director ETUCE

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Executive Summary

In 2013 and 2014, the Secondary Education Council of the Netherlands (VO-raad), the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) worked on a joint project titled, *Professional Autonomy, Accountability and Efficient Leadership – and the role of employers' organisations, trade unions and school leaders in international perspective*. The Ministry for Education and Employment of Malta, the Local Government Association of the UK and the General Trade Union for Education of the Netherlands (AOb) played an active role in this project.

Focus and methodology

The project's focus was on the role of educational employers and teacher unions in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising educational quality by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations. In the first phase of the project, Jaap Scheerens, Professor Educational Organization and Management at the University of Twente, prepared a conceptual framework. This framework explained the main concepts linked to school leadership and developed a questionnaire on "The role of social partners in school leadership", to structure the peer learning visits in the Netherlands, Malta and the United Kingdom (England). In the second phase, national task forces – consisting of local experts, education employers, trade union representatives, school leaders and Head teachers – answered the questionnaire and thus prepared the peer learning visits to their respective countries.

During these visits, members from the national task force presented their roles in the national school leadership systems. Members of EFEE and ETUCE were invited to reflect on their own national systems and share the differences and similarities regarding the presented case studies. In the third and final phase of the project, a final conference was organised to present the outcomes of the project and to discuss the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) Joint Declaration on School Leadership.

Central questions

Our project focused on the role of employers and teacher unions in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising educational quality, by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations.

The following questions were addressed:
- How is the social dialogue in education organised in the Peer Learning country? How are social partners involved in School Leadership?
- What are the key issues and concerns of employers and trade unions on target setting, mechanisms to improve quality and the division of responsibilities between the main actors?
- Patterns of functional decentralisation, with regards to accountability and evaluation, in the sense of who decides on a particular facet, e.g. are standardised tests being used, the use of absolute and relative norms, who is responsible for the management of feedback?
- What are critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness, at different levels of responsibility: school governors, principals and teachers?
- What are the proven successes and good practices in the Peer Learning Countries, and alternatively, what are the problematic areas and "blank spots" in different national settings?

Key results of the case studies

Social dialogue in education in the case study countries

The Foundation of Education in the Netherlands institutionalises the social dialogue between the education employers and trade unions. In addition to agreements on over-arching sector themes covered by the Foundation for Education, more specific agreements are made on sector level between employers in education and trade unions on one hand and the Ministry of Education on the other. In Malta, where the Ministry for Education and Employment is the main employer in education for state schoolteachers, tight working relationships exist with the trade unions. In England, institutionalised tri-partite consultation has been replaced by a fragmented set of bilateral meetings. In the Netherlands and in England, school or governing boards fulfil the role of the employer at local levels.

Key issues for employers and trade unions to improve quality

In all three countries the central government has a leading role in setting targets and defining quality agendas. In the Netherlands, the education employers have participated in the creation of these national priorities, and also operationalised performance indicators and professional standards in more detail. However, the trade unions have been critical regarding the way the ministry designs and issues educational policies. This is done only through the channel of the education employer-organisations, as there is no backing of the teacher unions. Occasionally trade unions have been involved in professional development programs for school leaders. In England, education employers and governing school bodies appear to be working with the government induced standards to implement improvement policies in schools. Trade unions in England put themselves at the service of schools to strengthen professional autonomy of teachers and occasionally "buffer" against what is felt as a heavy agenda of changes in the education field. Trade unions in Malta cooperate with the central government in adopting new policy initiatives. In all three countries social partners find themselves stimulating professional development for teachers and school leaders.

Patterns of functional decentralisation, with regards to accountability and evaluation

In all three countries the functional domain where school autonomy is largest is the primary process of teaching at classroom levels. The Netherlands and England have considerable autonomy in domains like curriculum, personnel management, and the way resources are applied. In Malta, decisions on the curriculum, including the choice of textbooks, are generally controlled by the central government. This is gradually changing, with schools in Malta given a larger say in curriculum matter. Examinations and high stakes tests are established by the central government in all three countries. In the Netherlands and England schools are autonomous in the selection of instruments for school self-evaluation and formative student assessment. Management of feedback and use of the results of formative evaluations belongs to the discretion of schools in all three countries.

Critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness

The perceptions on effectiveness enhancing strategies that were collected in this study show that in all countries, and among all stakeholders, much is expected from teacher professional development and teacher empowerment. Employers also have high expectations concerning effective school leadership. Opinions on the effectiveness of formative evaluations differ between countries, with a relatively high emphasis placed in the Netherlands and a low emphasis placed in England.

Conclusions

Our joint work on "Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient school leadership":
- Raised awareness of employers' organisations and trade unions. Including our role in enhancing the effectiveness and accountability autonomy of education institutions and school leaders.
- Contributed to the empowerment of school leaders, schools governors, and governing bodies by providing information and exchange of views on the necessary leadership skills for schools in the 21st century.
- Provided input to the European Policy Network on School Leadership of which both EFEE and ETUCE are members.

During the Peer Learning Visits, by exchanging best practices and experiences, it became clear that the dialogue between teachers and school leaders, between trade unions and employers, between schools and their direct community is of the upmost importance in guaranteeing good school leadership, in enhancing mutual trust and good will in striving for education quality.

These Peer Learning Visits appear to be very valuable for members of EFEE and ETUCE, as they provide an inspiring source of information with practical examples from our counterparts in other countries. They helped policy makers to reflect on ideas from abroad and to think out of the box.
At the same time the social partners of the hosting country did work jointly and intensively on the school leader theme, which contributed to the improvement of the industrial relations at national levels.

The European Social Partners in Education, EFEE and ETUCE, therefore committed themselves through the ESSDE Joint Declaration on School Leadership to actively promote social dialogue and effective school leadership for quality education at national, regional or local levels, respecting national education structures.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In 2011, EFEE coordinated a project on "Leadership and Governance in Schools", in close cooperation with its Dutch member for secondary education, the VO-raad. During this project, a survey among different EU employers' organisations was conducted regarding the employers' approach to the selection, training and accountability of school leaders. Within the last phase of this project, the members of EFEE expressed their interest for a follow-up study, linking the first project results with additional academic research. At the same time, the idea of peer learning visits was mentioned in order to study more in-depth structures of some countries with different employers' structures, different styles of school leadership, and different educational structures. ETUCE has also worked extensively on the issue of School Leadership and produced in 2012 an ETUCE survey report and an ETUCE Policy Paper on School Leadership. First having worked separately on the issue, the European Social Partners in Education deemed it high time to work jointly on the matter.

Therefore EFEE, ETUCE and the VO-raad proposed their joint project on *Professional Autonomy, Accountability and Efficient Leadership – and the role of employers' organisations, trade unions and school leaders in international perspective.* The Ministry for Education and Employment of Malta, the Local Government Association of the UK and the General Trade Union for Education of the Netherlands (AOB) also supported the project.

Focus

Internationally comparative studies document the differences in settings in which School Leadership is taking place (EFEE, 2012, ETUCE, 2012, LISA, 2009); these studies show many similarities and differences across countries. Many facets of leadership are distinguished: e.g. people technologies and HRM strategies, mission building and target settings, entrepreneurial relationships towards the school environment, distribution of leadership tasks and setting conditions for achievement-oriented work and high performance.

In order to make a step towards a more in depth investigation, the increased recognition of the responsibility of school leaders for school quality and performance (i.e. student attainment and teacher performance) are important starting points. School leaders are an important target group for both employers' organisations and trade unions, as they are the link between school management and teachers. Therefore, from both employers' organisations as well as trade union perspectives, school leaders play an important role in employment relations.

The responsibility of school leaders for excellence is closely associated with accountability of outcomes and leadership that is concerned with the primary process of teaching and learning in schools. The link between accountability and the motivation of teaching and learning comes from feedback on performance; at student, classroom and school levels. From this perspective, the application of internal school (self) evaluation and stimulating the use of assessment data, are relevant objects of investigation, as well as the concept of the participative teacher in leadership tasks.

Central questions

Our project focused on the role of employers and teacher-unions in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising educational quality, by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations.

The following questions were addressed:

- How is the social dialogue in education organised in the Peer Learning country? How are social partners involved in School Leadership?
- What are the key issues and concerns of employers and trade unions on target setting, mechanisms to improve quality and the division of responsibilities between the main actors?
- Patterns of functional decentralisation, with regards to accountability and evaluation, in the sense of who decides on a particular facet? E.g. are standardised tests being used, the use of absolute and relative norms, who is responsible for the management of feedback?
- What are critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness, at different levels of responsibility: school governors, principals and teachers?
- What is the state of the art on the issue of schools using the information from internal and external evaluation to improve teaching and learning?
- What are the proven successes and good practices in the Peer Learning Countries, and alternatively, what are the problematic areas and "blank spots" in different national settings?

Our study should lead to giving us insights as employers' organisations and trade unions in how *we* as social partners can contribute to improving industrial relations and employment relations with the ultimate goal to improve educational performance of school leaders.

Overall design of the work programme

In order to strengthen the findings of the first EFEE *School Leadership and governance* project, the ETUCE survey report and the ETUCE Policy Report on School Leadership, an important focus was placed on research.

This research component consisted of the following subcategories:

- A conceptual framework in which key concepts like functional decentralisation, distributed leadership, types of accountability and self-evaluation of schools are discussed and clarified and the state of the art on effective school leadership is summarised.
- A questionnaire to structure the input of the national task forces for the peer learning visits.
- An analysis on the findings of the academic portion of the final report.

The research activities described above have been performed by the external expert Jaap Scheerens, Professor of Educational Organization and Management at University of Twente (the Netherlands). Furthermore, he drafted the national case study report for the peer learning visit to the Netherlands. The case study report for Malta has been prepared by local expert Christopher Bezzina, Professor of Educational Leadership in the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Malta. And Ian Keating, Senior Policy Consultant, Local Government Association of the UK, drafted the case study report regarding the visit to England, UK.

In the preparatory phase of the project, a kick-off meeting was organised for necessary project planning and to divide the tasks among the members of the project Steering Committee. Furthermore, the conceptual framework and questionnaire were developed. In the second phase, national task forces – consisting of the local experts, education employers, trade union representatives, school leaders and head teachers – answered the questionnaire and prepared herewith the peer learning visits to their countries. Furthermore the three visits were organised:

- 25 April 2014 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, hosted by the VO-raad;
- 10-11 June 2014 in St Julian's, Malta, hosted by the Ministry for Education and Employment;
- 18-19 September 2014 in Hillingdon, England, UK, hosted by the Local Government Association.

During the peer learning visits, members of the national task force presented their roles in the national school leadership systems and members of EFEE and ETUCE were invited to reflect on their own national systems to share the differences and similarities with the presented case studies. In the third and final phase a conference was organised to present the outcomes of the project and to discuss the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) Joint Declaration. Furthermore this final report has thus been drafted.

Members of the Project Steering Committee were:
- VO-raad: Sjoerd Slagter (Special Advisor) and Myrthe van Groningen (Project Manager)
- EFEE: Bianka Stege (General Secretary) and Sarah Kik (Assistant General Secretary)
- ETUCE: Dennis Sinyolo (Coordinator)
- Local Government Association of the UK: David Simmonds (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Children)
- Ministry for Education and Employment Malta: Joseph Micallef (Director Human Resources)
- AOB – General Trade Union for Education of the Netherlands: Ben Hoogenboom, (Board Member)

Structure of the report

Following the introduction, the second chapter, titled *Conceptualizing governance and leadership,* clarifies and discusses key-concepts that are needed to address the complex subject matter of this study. These key-terms address decentralisation and autonomy, accountability, quality perspectives, leadership and governance orientations in education (including employment relationships). The conceptual chapter is to be seen as the basis for the application of these concepts in the questionnaire, which is added as an annex to the chapter. The questionnaire was designed to address the core questions of the study listed above.
The core of this report consists of three chapters in which the results of the three country's case study reviews are presented and analysed; the case study reports are presented in the order in which they were conducted. Chapter 3 reports on the Netherlands, Chapter 4 reports on Malta, and Chapter 5 contains the English case study. Each of the national case study reports start with a brief description of the build up and specific features of the national educational system in question. Next the contents of the three case study reviews is structured by the sequence of the twenty questions from the questionnaire.

In the concluding Chapter 6, a comparative analysis is described in which the three national case studies are compared on each issue that was addressed in the review based on the questionnaire. In the second portion of the chapter a further analyses of these descriptive comparisons are made. Conclusions are drawn in common cases and country specific good practices. These are presented under three headings: findings that reflect certain internal tension, findings regarding consistency between countries and stakeholders, and the finding that show in what way certain countries vary from one another. Furthermore, showcasing that this study has answered the project's initial central questions is summarised. Chapter 7 contains the ESSDE Joint Declaration of EFEE and ETUCE describing how we, as social partners, could contribute to improving industrial relations and employment relations with the ultimate goal to improving educational performance of our school leaders.

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Chapter 2: Conceptualising governance and leadership

By Jaap Scheerens, Professor, Educational Organisation and Management at University of Twente (the Netherlands).

Introduction

This paper is aimed at providing the conceptual framework for a project focused on the role of employers and teacher unions (social partners) in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders.

As such, the paper will provide the conceptual background for a questionnaire that will be used within the framework of national case studies and peer learning visits in three EU member countries: Malta, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

School leaders are expected to play a key role in the maintenance and improvement of educational quality (McKinsey, 2010). The current interest in the position of school leaders should be seen as triggered by the following developments:

a. A growing recognition of the economic and social benefits of schooling (e.g. OECD, 2010), the expectation that quality education has economic benefits and enhances social cohesion; this recognition has lead to a heightened attention for excellence and quality management in education.

b. Increased expectations regarding the malleability of educational quality (e.g Hattie, 2009); the belief that potential levers to improve education are known and applicable by relevant stakeholders.

c. Changes in the structure of national educational systems, mostly determined by tendencies to decentralisation and devolution on one hand, and accountability arrangements on the other (ETUCE, 2012); but also leading to new governance levels and pronounced stake-holder roles, like public employers, trade unions and parent organisations (EFEE, 2012).

d. Modernisation of the primary process of teaching and modernisation of schools as organisations; developments like inclusive education and use of ICT, as well as renewed aspirations for differentiation (with an eye to both equity and excellence) have implications for teaching and learning, new concepts of schooling, like the idea of the school as a learning organisation have important implications for school leadership and additional professional roles of teachers (Scheerens, 2013).

e. Internationalisation: phenomena like the influence of international assessment programmes like TIMSS and PISA, and impulses from international organisations like the European Commission have implications for national debates about the quality of education (e.g. McKinsey, 2010a).

On national and international levels, employers of education and trade unions are manifesting themselves as active stakeholders in stimulating the overall quality of education as well as effective school leadership. This project is intended to stimulate further debate among the partners regarding the directions, means and methods of enhancing school leadership effectiveness (EFEE/ETUCE, 2012).

Overview of the conceptual framework

Quality

When the point of reference in this project is "efficient leadership", it should be clarified what is intended with this concept. Quickly noted that "efficient" refers to leadership that is effective at the least possible cost. Effective in turn means that leadership is attaining pre-set goals. However, it is not useful to work

with a narrow conception of efficiency and, at least initially, broaden the discourse to "educational quality". Effectiveness and efficiency are facets of a more general notion of educational quality. Diverse perspectives and interpretations of educational quality will be referred to as likely options that countries might embrace.

Functional decentralisation

Decentralisation, devolution and increased autonomy at school levels all relate to providing more discretion and decision-making authority at lower administrative levels. The concept of functional decentralisation takes into consideration that systems may decentralise in one functional domain (e.g. personnel management) while centralising in another domain (e.g. examination and assessment). A framework will be presented that allows for describing patterns of decision making authority that differ in decision making levels and functional domain.

Additional stakeholders and governing bodies

As a direct consequence of decentralisation the role of educational organisations outside the formal administrative hierarchy, like trade unions and employers of education at national levels, may have become more pronounced. Similarly, at the local level, school boards may take over, or partly take over the responsibilities of local governing bodies, like municipalities. The role of social partners and school governors will be highlighted in reference to the framework of functional decentralisation.

Accountability

Accountability means that schools are expected to be explicit about their functioning and attainment to themselves and external parties. Different interpretations of accountability will be briefly introduced: professional accountability, accountability to clients and "consumers", and accountability towards higher administrative levels.

Strategies for quality improvement

A broad perspective on "improvement" will be the point of departure, distinguishing goal setting, "people" policies (recruiting and developing teachers), organisational development and improving the operating core of teaching and learning. References will be made to state of the art findings and ideas on school effectiveness and school improvement. Specific attention will be given to evaluation and feedback as a quality enhancing process.

Facets of educational leadership

Core leadership orientations, like instructional leadership, transformational leadership (oriented toward change and school improvement), and distributed leadership will be defined. Reference will be made to research findings in the domain of leadership effectiveness.

Quality

Education quality can be clarified on the basis of a conceptual framework that describes education. The most frequently used way to do this is to depict education as a productive system, in which inputs are transferred into outcomes. The central "black box" can be defined at various levels. As far as education is concerned, this could be the national education system, the school or the classroom.
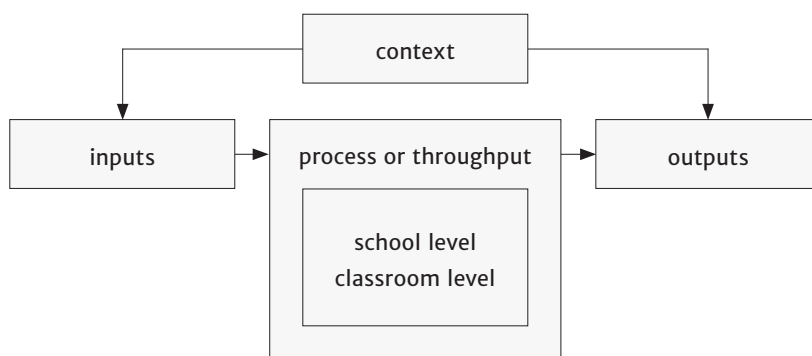
Figure 1: A basic systems model of school functioning

When the level of outputs is the core quality of judgments on schools, educational programmes, or the functioning of national educational systems, this could be described as the *productivity perspective.* There are many practical applications of this perspective: test based accountability policies, school performance feedback systems, and the comparison of mean country level achievement among countries on the basis of international assessment studies, like TIMSS and PISA. In case the interest is not focused primarily on average achievement levels, but rather on the distribution of outcomes, inputs, and processes: *equity* is the predominant quality facet. In international comparisons equity is getting more and more attention (see for example the OECD report titled "Overcoming social background", based on the 2009 edition of PISA (OECD, 2010a)). When *effectiveness* is the predominant quality perspective, the focus is on the instrumental value of input and process indicators to maximise output. This is the question – what works best? From a quality perspective this means that it is not the "beauty" of organisational arrangements or teaching strategies, but the extra value these approaches create in terms of school output. When effectiveness at the lowest possible cost is considered, *efficiency* is the quality facet in question. Monetary measures of inputs are key aspects in efficiency measurements. Finally, the relationship of the school with its environment may be the core issue for quality judgment. Particularly the question of *responsiveness,* which in the most general sense means that a school pays attention to impulses, both in terms of supply and demand, from a larger context. Where effectiveness and efficiency deal with the question of "doing things right", responsiveness can be seen as addressing the question of "doing the right things", such as choosing educational objectives that conform to the demands of further education or the labour market.

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These facets of educational quality, defined on the basis of their key elements and interrelationships included in figure 1, are schematically summarised below:

Quality facet	Key indicators and relationship between indicators
Productivity	Outcomes
Equity	The distribution of inputs, processes and outcomes
Effectiveness	Association between inputs and processes on one hand and outcomes on the other
Efficiency	Effectiveness at the lowest possible costs
Responsiveness	The way input, processes and intended outcomes are tailored to the demands of the context

Figure 2: Facets of quality in education

This is a general framework, in the sense that it may accommodate different kinds of outcomes, not just cognitive outcomes, but also social objectives, affective outcomes and moral principles.
UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2004) discusses notions of quality that are associated with "education traditions". On closer inspection these traditions are partly philosophical schools of thought (humanism, behaviourism, critical theory), and partly pragmatic and determined by specific contextual conditions or "types" of education (quality in the indigenous tradition and quality in adult education approaches). The "non behaviouristic traditions" tend to be more critical of external, measurable outcome standards, emphasise process, equity and importance of local contexts (Scheerens et al., 2011). In a similar vein, the EPNoSL(2012) report distinguishes humanism versus instrumental utilitarianism in school leadership orientations.

Functional decentralisation

The essence of the concept of functional decentralisation is that educational systems may be centralised in some domains of decision-making but not in others. In order to determine elements, or *domains* of educational administration, many categorisation schemes are available in literature (e.g. James, 1994; Winkler, 1989; Bacharach et al., 1990; Rideout and Ural, 1993). The common cores of these categorisations are divided in three main areas:
a. An educational domain (goals, methods, curricula, evaluation procedures);
b. Organisational, managerial and administrative domains (including human resource management, groupings and assignment and foundational regulations);
c. A dimension concerning finance and the way financial resources are applied.

The OECD has developed an approach to measure "functional decentralisation" that is based on establishing the number of relevant decisions made in a certain domain at a certain administrative level. This approach is described in more detail in the Annex to this paper.

Professional autonomy of teachers

The traditional role of school leaders *vis a vis* professionally autonomous teachers is nicely explained in the organisational model of the school as a professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979). According to this model, schools depend on professionally autonomous teachers, with little need of coordination and cooperation between them. According to this model, leaders have an unpronounced, largely representative and administrative function. Despite important changes, elements of the professional bureaucracy still exist in many countries, including continuing high administrative burdens for school leaders. "Modernisations" of school organisations, like more institutionalised cooperation between teachers, accountability requirements, educational leadership and the use of ICT provisions have, in a certain sense, diminished teacher autonomy. In another sense, professional autonomy is re-installed by underlining teacher-empowerment in school improvement, stimulation of continuous professional development and strengthening professional norms. Distributed leadership and teacher leadership can also be seen as newer forms of stimulating the professional autonomy of teachers.

Additional stakeholders and governing bodies

Non-governmental employers of education and trade unions might play an important role in agreeing with the central government on decisions in domains like personnel policies and use of resources. Closer to the school, school boards could either be defined as belonging to the level of the school (level 6) or as being part of the local decision making level (level 5), (Hooge and Honing, 2014). On an international context school governance, as another consequence of decentralisation policies, is becoming more pronounced, the relationship and division of responsibilities between school governors and school leaders, demands more attention. According to EFEE, (2012, p. 12), "there is a perception that, generally, school board members lack the knowledge and skills essential to managing their schools effectively."
To the degree that administrative authority may be delegated to school boards and schools, the discretion of school governors and school leaders in enhancing educational quality will increase. Similarly, a productive collaboration and an efficient division of tasks between school governors and school leaders may be an issue.

Accountability

Accountability in education means that schools should provide information regarding their performance and implementation to outside parties. In this way schools and educational provisions are open to the public for review. Outside agencies, which have vested interest in the quality of education, may use this information for sanctioning (providing rewards or punishments). Such sanctions may be administrative in nature, when originating from national, regional or local governing bodies, or take the shape of certain reactions from the consumers of education. Parents, for example, may try to persuade schools to alter their practices, or, in situations of free school choices, may take their children to another school.
Several global developments have stimulated demands for accountability in education.
These are:
- The growing realisation of the increasing importance of education, when economies develop into "knowledgeable societies".
- The high cost of education. Which in many countries is the highest post in government expenditure, paired with economic decline in the eighties, this realisation has led to an increased concern with the *efficiency* of education provisions.
- An increased sense of openness and making public sector provisions accountable for the quality of their services. In the Netherlands for example, the education inspectorate was forced by law to make public detailed reports on school reviews conducted by inspectors.

The substantive interest in accountability is in checking the *quality* or the general "well-functioning" of educational provisions. Quality is a rather general term. In actual practice, concerns may relate to a good choice of educational objectives (*relevance*), or to the question whether the educational objectives are actually attained (*effectiveness*). There may also be an emphasis on the fair and equal distributions of educational resources (*equity*) or a specific concern with an economic use of these resources (*efficiency*).

Recognition that schools are to be accountable to stakeholders other than administrators or governmental units also points to a basic requirement for democracy. Particularly when this concerns the immediate consumers and the clients of educational provisions, information from monitoring and evaluation can be seen as a basis for more direct democracy in education. Influence from the immediate clients and stakeholders are also seen as a stimulant of effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, schools may also use information from monitoring and evaluation for reflecting on their own functioning and for feedback to teachers. Such approaches may be indicated under headings like "internal quality control" or "school self evaluation" (EFEE/ETUCE, 2013). But also terms like "professional accountability" or "internal accountability" are sometimes used for these approaches (Carnoy et al., 2003).

Strategies for quality improvement

The school and educational effectiveness knowledge base provide an instrumental orientation to school improvement, meaning that strengthening identified school factors is expected to lead to better student performance. In very broad terms the variables identified in educational effectiveness have to do with the technology of the curriculum (as intended and implemented) and with facets of the organisational climate. In this way one could say that a broad orientation to school improvement could be labelled as the *technology and climate emphasis.*

However, it should be noted that schools could choose alternative orientations. A second strategy might be labelled as the *teacher recruitment and professional development strategy.* According to this strategy most of a school's energy for improvement should be focussed on teacher issues, including human resources management. Thirdly, schools could capitalize on *matching and grouping issues.* Matching could be both externally oriented towards the local community, towards higher administrative levels, other schools and to parents. Internally oriented matching could be done in grouping students in classrooms and learning groups and assigning teachers to these groups of students.

As noted in the above, applying the knowledge base of educational effectiveness research is closest to the Technology and Climate orientation. The general factors, as well as more minute and detailed descriptions, of the key variables identified are available in the literature, e.g. Marsano (2003), Scheerens et al. (2007) and Hattie and Alderman, (2012). At the level of strategy formation a more synthetic description of the key factors is considered helpful. The following alternative emphases within the Technology and Climate orientation are distinguished:

a. Exposure to educational content. This could be seen as a composite of opportunity to learn (what content is being taught) and instruction time. It expresses the curricular focus and duration of exposure in school curricula and teaching.

b. *Evaluation, monitoring and feedback provisions.* Evaluation and feedback can be seen as driving improvement at school and classroom level (cf. EFEE/ETUCE, 2013). Implied facets include clarity of purpose through standards, examination syllabi etc., verification of what students have learned, identification of strengths and weaknesses in content and skills that are mastered, feedback and diagnosis of outcome patterns, systematic consideration of remedial strategies and setting concrete goals for improvement at student, classroom and school level, in cooperation with other teachers, school principals and eventual support staff. These latter characteristics could make evaluation/feedback/systematic corrective action the core task of related professional development and teacher cooperation.

c. *Managing the school climate.* This involves diverse facets like creating a safe atmosphere, positive interactions, as well as fostering high expectations and pressure to achieve.

d. *Managing the teaching and learning programme.* Important synthesizing constructs in the field of teaching effectiveness are "cognitive activation" (Klieme, 2012),"focused teaching" (Louis et al. 2011) and "active teaching" (Hattie, 2009). Careful attention to lesson planning, variation in structure, independence in learning assignments and keeping students engaged seem to be the core issues in these constructs. It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on these developments, see Scheerens, 2013.

e. *Meta-control* as the overriding leadership approach. Meta-control is a concept from control theory, and means "control of controllers". Applied to school leadership this concept emphasises the notion that schools are professional organisations, with teachers as semi-autonomous professionals. Teachers may metaphorically be seen as the prime "managers" of teaching and learning at school. A school leader as a meta-controller is not a laissez-faire leader, but one who sets clear targets, facilitates, and monitors the primary process of schooling from a distance (Scheerens, 2012).

These five strategic angles are the substantive focus of enhancing school effectiveness and can be seen as having certain connections. Exposure and evaluation/feedback have a common element in educational objectives and learning standards. Alignment of what is taught and what is tested is the key issue of opportunity to learn. High expectations and pressures to achieve, as facets of the school climate, likewise need a substantive focus in the form of objectives, standards, assessment instruments and feedback. The educational content dimension, perhaps indicated as the implemented school curriculum, is a core dimension of the teaching and learning programme, next to the ideas on transmission that are more central in concepts like cognitive activation. Managing all of these strategies, as well as their connections, is the task of school leadership as meta-control. Integration of these angles to school improvement, inspired by the educational knowledge base is very close to the approach of Comprehensive School Reform, e.g. Borman et al. (2003).

System level policies and structural characteristics of educational systems can be seen as pre-conditions or constraints of school level improvement policies, to which schools need to adapt. Analytically, one could ask which system conditions could be seen as supportive of effective schools and improvement. A third, more "neutral" approach might be to establish matches between the major system level reform dimensions and structural conditions, as discussed earlier, and the school level improvement strategies.

This third approach would favour accountability policies as the best matching system level arrangement for the Technology and Climate orientation to effective school improvement. Accountability policies touch directly on core facets of school functioning, like performance standards, achievement orientation, and perhaps also the "internal accountability" of schools (see the reference to the work of Carnoy et al. 2003). As accountability policies are almost inevitably associated with a degree of centrality in the curriculum, this would emphasise the connection with content exposure and opportunity to learn at school levels.

Other system level policies and structural arrangements are more closely associated with alternative orientations. Enhanced school autonomy, as well as strong teacher policies appeal more to teacher recruitment and professional development. Choice and market mechanisms, as well as tracked versus comprehensive school systems, are associated with admittance, selection and grouping processes at school levels.

The development of educational support on national system levels and its function in stimulating school improvement could be seen as a relevant object of study as well.

Typology of educational leadership

Instructional leadership

Research in the field of school effectiveness emphasised the importance of instructional leadership, assuming that learning results will improve if principals are able to spend more time on tasks that are directed toward the primary process of teaching and learning. This type of research has led not only to the further conceptualisation of the concept of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 1983), but also to a series of studies focusing on the central question of which behaviours are demonstrated by those principals of schools whose achievements

exceed expectations. These results suggest that a number of leadership orientations are important for school effectiveness, including the establishment of high expectations for students and their learning achievements, emphasis on basic skills, involvement with instructional methods, coordination of instructional programmes, evaluation of student progress, provision of support and guidance for teachers and the creation of an orderly and learning-oriented climate (Van Vilsteren, 1999).

Transformational leadership

The concept of transformational leadership arose in the 1990's (Fullan, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1990).
A transformational leader has the task of developing the school organisation by bringing about a cultural shift within the school. The idea behind the transformational approach is that a culture of autonomous, isolated professionals remains dominant in many schools. This impedes the introduction of necessary educational innovation and improvement. The cultural shift therefore involves the notion that schools must grow towards a culture of collegiality, shared planning and a continuous effort to bring about improvement. This means that principals have a role in the creation of a working environment in which teachers work together and identify with the mission of the school. Means for achieving such an environment include the delegation of tasks, expansion of teacher qualifications (empowerment) and the (shared) development of a vision for the direction in which the school must develop. In addition, the importance of creating a learning school organisation by transforming teachers into learning teachers must be emphasised. Transformational leadership is often contrasted with transactional leadership. Whereas transformational leadership primarily seeks to increase the intrinsic motivation of the teachers, in transactional leadership teachers are stimulated primarily to change on the basis of external rewards.

Integral leadership, including an "entrepreneurial" role of leadership

In the concept of "integral leadership," the overlap between educational and transformational leadership is recognised. The rise of this concept is sometimes related to expansion in scale and the increased autonomy of schools. The basic assumption of integral leadership is that distinguishing between educational leadership and administrative leadership is not very effective, primarily because it leads to fragmentation and segmentation. For this reason, school leaders should integrate all domains (e.g., education, personnel, finance) within their schools, mostly by developing school-wide strategic perspectives that integrate them all.
A proponent of this approach, Leithwood (1992) stresses the importance of an integral orientation on the part of school leaders to the development of schools as efficient and effective organisations. Leithwood states that school leadership should be considered from an integral school-wide perspective, which should form the foundation for questions concerning what to do to improve the school and how to do it.
The integral perspective also appears in yet another approach to leadership developed by Quinn et al. (1993), which may be useful studying school leadership. The core of this approach is that managers fulfil different roles according to their values, norms, goals and task orientations. For example, one manager may attach greater value to productivity. According to the framework, such a manger would fulfil the roles of administrator and producer; these roles, in turn, imply that the manager would (try to) change the organisational culture and structure in order to optimise productivity. Another manager, however, may emphasise cohesion and the organisational commitment of employees. According to the framework, such a manager would take on the roles of mentor and stimulator, while simultaneously providing employees with the opportunity to participate in decision-making. A third type of manager is seen as being externally oriented, manifesting the role of negotiator and innovator. This latter role is close to the idea of *entrepreneurial leadership* (Lisa, report, 2009). Finally a fourth managerial role, according to the Quinn et al. framework (Quinn et al., 1996), is preoccupied with formal regulations concerning the internal "running" of the organisation. This fourth role is associated with coordinating and controlling.
A related typology of school leadership orientations is presented in the EPNoSL (2012) report, in which core

leadership functions are described in terms of "Translation of external expectations into internal meaning and direction", "Understanding and empowering teachers and other staff", "Structuring and culturing schools", and "Working with partners and the external environment".

Distributed leadership and related concepts

Hierarchical leadership is sometimes associated with instructional leadership, while transformational leadership is associated with bottom up decision-making. This participative, bottom up, collaborative practice has, in the education context, been referred to as "distributed leadership". Other related terms are teacher leadership and democratic leadership. Both "planned" and "emergent" interpretations are given to this shared or distributed leadership. In the case of planned distribution, the concept is close to delegation. When authors speak of a more dynamic, interactive or emergent participation, any kind of hierarchical or focused leadership disappears to the background. A critical comment with the latter interpretation is the assertion that when everyone leads, nobody leads (Leithwood et al., 2006). A further conceptual distinction is whether the distribution is limited to personnel with a leadership function, such as deputy or coordinator, or is also extended to personnel without a formal leadership role (e.g. teacher leadership).

Expectations on the beneficial effects of distributed leadership are high, as it is seen as a way to do justice to the professional autonomy of teachers (ETUCE, 2012, p.2).

In a recent contribution by Heck and Hallinger (2009), leadership is not only distributed to other personal but, figuratively speaking, to organisational structures as well:

"Dynamic theories of organizational processes seek to describe how changes in organizational structures (e.g., size, hierarchy, staffing) and social-cultural interactions (e.g., organizational culture, decision-making structures, leadership, social networks) influence organizational outcomes over a period of time" (p.14) Heck and Hallinger, 2009, ibid) say that: "If leadership is treated as an organizational quality, then studies of leadership must have as their unit of analysis the organization".

In their view school organizational improvement is seen as an interactive process over time, in which (shared) leadership is just one of the interacting elements, next to personnel composition, relations with stakeholders and organizational climate. This view on school leadership brings us close to a concept that was proposed much earlier: the concept of "substitutes for leadership" (Kerr and Jermier, 1998).

Conclusion: contextual alignment of efficient leadership

Throughout this paper school leadership has been placed between structural conditions of national educational systems, like those determined by decentralisation and accountability policies, and professionally autonomous teachers. The discretion that school leaders have is constrained by these two sets of conditions, the conditions set from "above", and those from "below". Variations between national educational systems are manifested in different structural characteristics and policy emphases at national level and possibly divergent perspectives on the professional autonomy of teachers. One might schematically locate school leaders in a multi-level structure of organisational conditions and in this way identify the main actors and stakeholders at each level. Next, taking into account that the key orientation is maintaining and improving educational quality, one could focus the description on which levers and core activities, at each level, are seen as enhancing quality and effectiveness (cf. Scheerens, 2007).

In the education sector, we see a global trend of decentralisation. Within the process of decentralization decision-making powers and responsibilities are shifted from the central ministries of education to lower administrative levels, such as local governments, communities, associations, education councils, and schools. As may also be the case, central governments delegate only part of its decision-making authority to lower levels or private parties; in the case of the Netherlands "education agreements" between the government, employers and trade unions regulate working conditions and special programmes. This makes the landscape of educational employers highly diverse. This diversity is also reflected in the types of organisations that are represented in EFEE: ministries of education, local and regional authority employers' organisations, education

councils and associations of colleges and universities.

This European project focuses on the role of education employers and teacher-unions (Social Partners) in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in order to improve the quality of education. A common issue for both partners are the working conditions of those employed in education. Additional areas of interest are school management, development of the teaching profession, founding and funding of schools, attainment targets, standards and determination of examinations.

At the EU level, the European Social Partners in the education sector are EFEE and ETUCE, which represents teacher trade unions in Europe. Within the framework of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue, members of EFEE and ETUCE discuss current issues in the education sector, such as recruitment and retention of teachers, self-evaluation of schools and teachers, updating skills and competences, school leadership and governance. The ultimate goal of this European dialogue between Social Partners is dedicated to the improvement in the quality of education in Europe, thereby focusing on the modernisation of the education sector, its managements and its teaching personnel.

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Chapter 3: Case study the Netherlands

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*This case study is based on the answers to the Questionnaire, discussed by the national
task force, and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 25 April 2014.*

Preamble: the Dutch education system[1]

Population

The Netherlands has 16.8 million inhabitants. It is densely populated and highly urbanised, with 83% of the
total population living in urban areas. As in other European countries, the birth rate is declining, but with 1.76
children per woman, it remained higher than the EU average in 2011 of 1.57 children per woman. Migration is
the main factor for population growth and potential educational expansion. Immigration to the Netherlands
has continuously increased since 2005. In early 2012, 21% of Dutch residents were non-native, with the largest
immigrant groups coming from Turkey, Indonesia and Germany.

Governance

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The monarch is the head of state
and the prime minister is the head of government. The executive power is exerted by the Council of Ministers,
which is the deliberative council of the cabinet. The cabinet is responsible to the bicameral parliament. Dutch
policy-making has a long tradition of power-sharing and consensus decision-making. The government is
typically formed by a coalition of political parties. Both trade unions and employer's organisations are consulted
in economic and social decisions and meet regularly with the government within the Social-Economic Council
(*Sociaal-Economische Raad*, SER).

Economy

The Netherlands is a wealthy country, with its GDP per capita ranked sixth in the OECD in 2012. There has
been a significant increase in unemployment rates in recent years, from 3% in 2008 to 6.6% in June 2013. At
the same time, unemployment rates remain relatively low compared to the OECD average of 8% and the EU
average of 11%. The increase in unemployment has affected people differently depending on their age and
educational attainment, with the youngest and least-educated cohort being hit the hardest.

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1   Note this text is based on a recent OECD report on the functioning of educational evaluation and
     assessment in the Netherlands. Nusche et al. (2014) OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in
     the Netherlands. Paris: OECD publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264211940-en

Main features of the school system

Education is compulsory from age five to sixteen, but students can voluntarily enter primary education at age four[2]. Figure 3 illustrates the structure of the Dutch school system and student movements across different school types. The Dutch school system is organised into two phases:
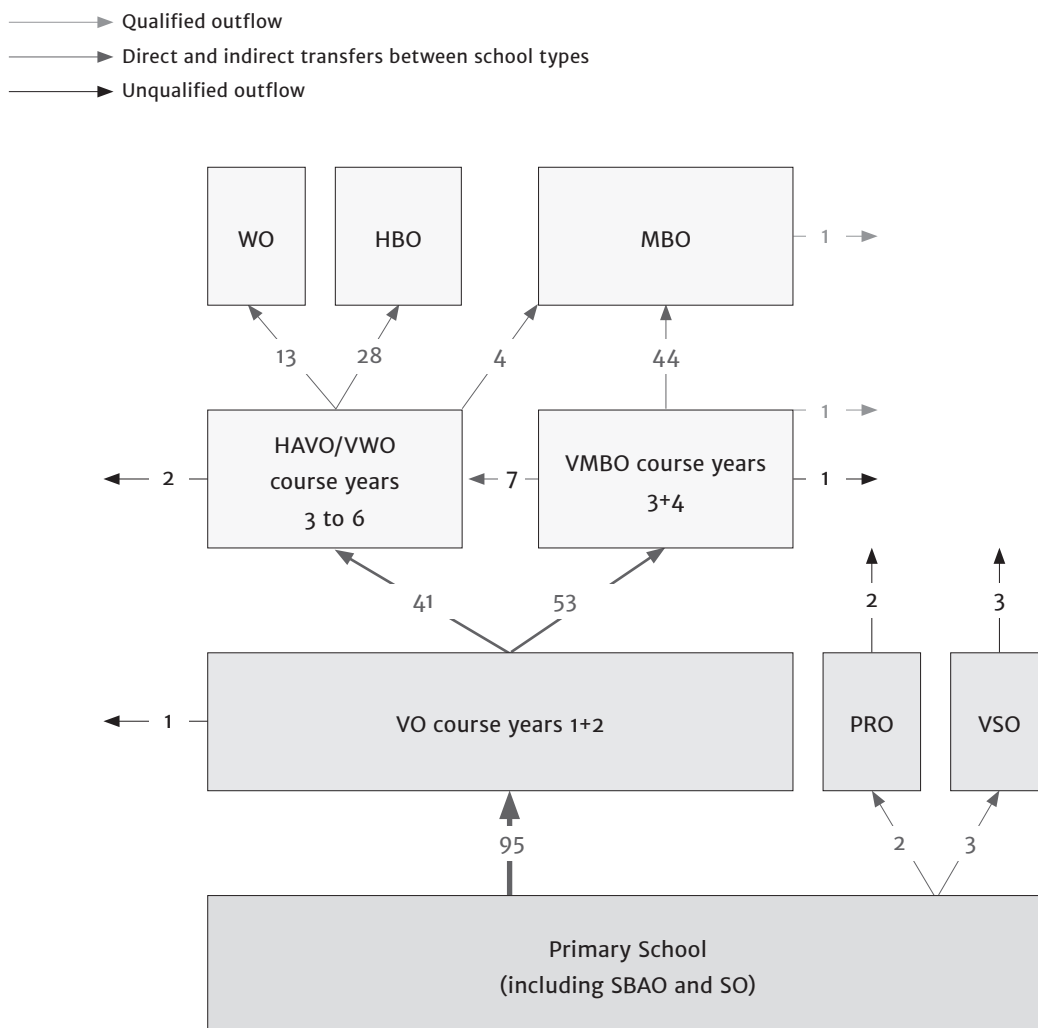
1. **Primary education (PO, ages 4-12)** lasts for eight years. There is also an offer of special primary education for children with special educational needs aged three to twelve. Schools are free to determine the content and methods of teaching, but their work must be based on national attainment targets and reference levels for literacy and numeracy. At the end of a student's primary education, they receive a school report describing their achievement levels and potential. They transfer into different types of secondary education, based on their achievement and the advice of their primary school teacher.

2. **Secondary education (VO, from age 12)** lasts between four and six years. The secondary school system is highly stratified, even though most secondary schools offer a number of different programmes in the same building. The first two years of secondary education (VO 1/2) are intended to provide students with a shared curriculum of basic general education. However, most secondary schools stream their students at this stage, foreshadowing the later tracking into different programmes. There are two main learning pathways: pre-vocational education, (VMBO) and education preparing for tertiary education (HAVO and VWO).

   - **Pre-vocational education (VMBO, ages 12-16)** caters to vocationally oriented students and lasts for four years. It is intended as a foundation course providing a basis for further vocational training (MBO), which is focused on preparing students for the labour market. Students in VMBO can choose among four learning programmes. Students who complete the theoretical programme may choose to transfer to HAVO. In 2010, 53% of students having completed primary education entered VMBO programmes.
   - **Pre-tertiary education** exists in two main forms. **Senior general secondary education (HAVO, ages 12-17)** lasts for five years and is intended to provide students with a basic general education, preparing them for professional higher education (HBO), typically provided at universities of applied sciences. **Pre-university education (VWO, ages 12-18)** lasts for six years and is intended to prepare students for progression to higher academic education (WO), typically provided at universities. Gymnasia offers such pre-university education with a programme that includes the subjects Latin, Greek and classic culture. In 2010, 41% of students, having completed primary education, entered HAVO or VWO programmes.

At the secondary level, there is also an offer of special secondary education (VSO) intended for students with special educational needs. In 2010, 3% of primary school leavers entered VSO. In addition, there is a programme of practical training (PRO), intended for students who are considered unlikely to obtain a qualification through one of the other learning pathways, even with special support. Practical training prepares students for direct entry to the labour market. In 2010, 2% of primary school leavers entered PRO. Some VMBO schools also provide learning support programmes (LWOO) to students with learning difficulties.

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2   This review covers primary and secondary education (ISCED 1-3). The review does not cover special education nor the apprenticeship part of pre-vocational education.

Figure 3: Structure of the Dutch school system and student movements

In percentages of a cohort of students leaving primary education, 2010

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————▶  Qualified outflow
————▶  Direct and indirect transfers between school types
————▶  Unqualified outflow
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Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2012), *Key Figures 2007-2011: Education, Culture and Science*, The Hague.

Notes: **HAVO =** General secondary education; **HBO =** Professional higher education; **MBO =** Vocational education; **PRO =** Elementary vocational training; **SBAO** Special primary education; **SO =** Special education; **VMBO =** Pre-vocational secondary education; **VO =** Secondary education; **VSO =** Secondary special education; **VWO =** Pre-university education; **WO =** Academic higher education

Governance

School autonomy and freedom of education

The Netherlands has one of the OECD's most devolved education systems, with schools enjoying a high degree of autonomy. Responsibility for education is shared almost entirely between schools and the central government, with no significant intermediate level of educational administration. With regards to ensuring the teaching quality, the Dutch Government describes the distribution of responsibilities for educational reform as follows: "the government will establish the objectives of the policy measures (what) while the field itself will decide how to best pursue those objectives (how).

School autonomy is grounded in the principle of "freedom of education", which has been guaranteed by the Dutch Constitution since 1917. Freedom of education gives the right to any natural or legal person to set up a school, to organise teaching and to determine the (educational, religious or ideological) principles on which teaching is based. This constitutional arrangement puts public and private schools on equal ground, with every school receiving public funding provided that they meet the requirements for schools in their sector. Parents have their free choice to schools, and funding "follows the student", which lays the foundation for potentially strong competition among schools.

Central steering and support

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science have responsibility for the overall education system, but it does not interfere with the organisation of individual schools. The Ministry's responsibilities relate mainly to establishing legislation and determining the structure and funding mechanisms of the education system. It can also control the system by setting quantitative or qualitative standards, attainment targets and examinations. The Minister of Education is also responsible for school inspection, which is carried out by the Dutch Schools Inspectorate, an executive agency under the responsibility of the Ministry.

Schools and school boards are responsible for ensuring quality at the school level, and the Schools Inspectorate checks that they do so effectively. There is also a large intermediary structure of school support organisations, some of which are organised according to religious denominations. In the 1990's, several of these bodies were secularised and merged into Councils for each of the educational sectors. The Council for Primary Education (PO-raad) and the Council for Secondary Education (VO-raad) represent the employers (school boards) of their respective sectors and offer support services to schools, such as a team of 'flying brigades' that work with schools identified by the Inspectorate as weak or very weak.

Schools and school boards

Every school is governed by a legally recognised competent authority, or school board, which oversees the implementation of legislation and regulations in the school. Traditionally, public schools were established by the state and governed mostly by local governments. But since the 1980's, there has been a trend of local governments setting up separate legal entities or foundations as school boards and transferring parts or all of the governance of schools to them. In addition, the Dutch education system has a large sector of government-dependent private schools, *i.e.* schools that are privately run but publicly funded. These schools are typically based on religious or ideological principles. While public schools are open to all students, government-dependent private schools may refuse students whose parents do not subscribe to the school's profile or principles.

The composition of school boards varies widely across the Netherlands. Governors may be volunteers (laypersons receiving a honorarium) or professionals (receiving a salary). While voluntary governors join a school board through co-optation, their internal supervisors appoint professional governors. In the case they are appointed, governors are trustees of the school rather than representatives. Governors are typically citizens from the local community, members of a religious or life philosophy community, or professionals with specific expertise such as law, finance, HRM or education. In 2011, 48% of all school governors in primary education were parents, but they were not evenly distributed across school boards. School boards may be comprised of only parents, a mix of parents and professional governors, or no parents at all. A governing board can be responsible for more than one school.

Further characterization of the Dutch educational system

During the Peer Learning Visit organised for this project in the Netherlands on 25 April 2014, the selective nature of the Dutch secondary school structure was further elaborated on. The idea of a heterogeneous grouping of students in the first one or two years of secondary schooling has not been implemented. Early selection becomes further emphasised in this way. In actual practice there is hardly any "upstream" from the vocational to the academic tracks, and between the lower and higher academic tracks. When it comes to autonomy with respect to educational resources it was explained that the "lump sum"

that schools obtain and manage includes teacher salaries. About 85% of the financial means are devoted to teacher salaries.

Multiple actors in the field of school evaluation

The challenges pertaining to the multi-player nature of the Dutch school evaluation context is exacerbated by the fact that beyond the operators or owners of schools (the boards) and the main state supervision agency (the inspectorate), there are several further actors and stakeholders who can and want to find their place in the school evaluation landscape and whose actions and views have to be taken into account.

- The state audit agency (AlgemeneRekenkamer)[3] when performing either its regularity or its performance audits might visit school boards and individual schools. These visits might result in relevant evaluation statements.
- The Education Cooperation (Onderwijscoöperatie)[4], created by teacher unions and professional organisations in 2011, has also become a key player not only in fostering teacher professionalism but also in the evaluation of both teachers and schools. This organisation is a strong promoter of the peer review approach, encouraging teams of teachers to mutually evaluate schools, and it helps this process by developing tools for evaluation.
- The national association of school leaders (AlgemeneVerenigingSchoolleiders, AVS)[5] is another important organisation. The organisation supports school leaders, among others, in developing internal evaluation and quality management systems.
- A particularly important player in the field of school evaluation is the large national network of private or semi-private consultancy agencies, most of them associated in Edventure,[6] an organisation representing approximately 2,500 consultants. Among the many forms of service products offered (sold) to school boards and schools there are naturally many products related to school evaluation. School boards can, for example, buy audit services simulating the formal inspection that allows them to prepare themselves for the live evaluation by the inspectorate.[7]
- The Primary and Secondary Education Councils have developed a range of tools and services to support schools and school boards in the evaluation and improvement of schools. In particular, they set up the so-called "flying brigades", a group of school improvement consultants who provide school development support, typically at the request of school boards following the identification of an unsatisfactory school by the inspectorate.
- Finally, the educational research community also plays an important role, as its members appear in many roles in this complex "ecosystem" of individuals and organisations operating together in the Dutch system of school evaluation.

Curriculum and learning objectives

While the principle of freedom of education implies that schools are free to determine the content and methods of teaching, the central government sets quality standards that apply to both public and private schools. There is no national curriculum, but the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science establishes core learning objectives that students are expected to meet. Core learning objectives have been set for Dutch, English, mathematics, social studies, science, arts and physical education, as well as for a number of subjects within

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3   See the website of the organisation here: http://www.courtofaudit.nl/english
4   See the website of the organisation here: http://www.onderwijscooperatie.nl
5   See the website of the organisation here: http://www.avs.nl
6   See the website of the organisation here: http://www.edventure.nl
7   See the advertisement of this product ("Audit gebaseerd op het toezichtkader van de inspectie" meaning "Audit based on the supervisory framework of inspection") on the website of "Onderwijsexpertise.nl" here: http://www.onderwijsexpertise.nl/dienst/858

the different secondary education programmes. The core learning objectives provide a legal prescription for the knowledge and skills students are expected to achieve at the end of primary and secondary education. As the core learning objectives are described in very broad terms, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has developed additional reference levels for literacy and numeracy. Since 2010 schools are required to implement these objectives. The reference levels provide a general description of knowledge and skill levels to achieve, a description of the type of tasks to be mastered and the criteria that these tasks should meet. The reference levels are definite for the end of primary education and the end of each of the educational tracks (VMBO, HAVO, VWO) in secondary education. For each of these stages, they indicate a "fundamental" level to be achieved by all students and an "advanced" level for gifted students.

Answers to the Questionnaire and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 25 April, 2014

1. How is the social dialogue organised in your country as far as education is concerned?

In the Netherlands from 2010 onward, the social dialogue in education is organised by the Foundation for Education (*Stichting van het Onderwijs*). Social partners have founded this platform. The following organisations take part: the PO –Council (PO-Raad), VO-Council (VO-raad), the Council for Secondary Vocational Education (MBO Raad), the Association for Higher Education (uniting tertiary level institutions at ISCED, 5B level) called VSNU. As well as trade unions in the field of education, united under two main umbrella organisations, FNC and CNV. There are a number of *associated organisations*, representing others students, and the *Educational Cooperation*, which is a joint organisations of the trade unions in education[8] The issues addressed in the Foundation for Education are: influencing national educational policy, addressing educational themes that transcend the various educational sectors and active contribution to a positive image of education. The broad scope of issues that are addressed is evident from the recent National Agreement on Education (*Nationaal Onderwijsakkoord),* between the members of the Foundation and the Minister of Education, which was signed in October 2013. This agreement covers extra spending on education, salary levels and conditions of labour for teachers, training and professional development requirements, 'professional space' for teachers, as well as extra financial means for the stimulation of educational quality. In addition to agreements on over-arching themes covered by the Foundation for Education, at sector level, more specific agreements are made between employers in education and trade unions and the Ministry of Education. For example, the Policy Agreement for Secondary education (*Bestuursakkoord VO)* has, "Improvement of education quality" as a main theme. This agreement was reached in September 2013 and is oriented towards better student performance, improved quality and professional development of teachers and school leaders[9]. A similar agreement has been reached between the PO-Council and the Ministry of Education[10]. This agreement is dedicated to the improvement of educational quality as well, and, like the *Bestuursakkoord VO,* contains explicit performance indicators to be reached by 2015.

The way the educational social dialogue has been institutionalised in the Netherlands is a clear example of the Dutch "Polder model", in which organised stakeholders and interested parties "from the field" come to terms with the national government on all kinds of issues. The strength of this model is an agreement and commitment from practically all interested parties. Weakness, according to some critics, is the time consuming nature of the decision-making process.

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8   AOC raad, Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO), LAKS, Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb), Nuffic, Onderwijscooperatie, Platform Vakinhoudelijke Verenigingen Voortgezet Onderwijs, Vereniging Toezichthouders Onderwijsinstellingen (VTOI) Source: http://www.stichtingvanhetonderwijs.nl/over_de_stichting/geass_organisaties.shtml

9   http://www.vo-raad.nl/dossiers/bestuursakkoord-vo

10   http://www.edux.nl/site_files/uploads/BESTUURSAKKOORD%20PRIMAIR%20ONDERWIJS%202012.pdf

During the Peer Learning Visit organised for this project in the Netherlands on 25 April 2014, some nuances in the overall harmony of the Dutch agreement among stake holders were mentioned. Although formally the Foundation for Education is the institutionalised body where social dialogue can take place, in actual practice important agreements are often established on the basis of collaboration between partners beyond the Foundation.

Although there is good communication and broad agreement on main aspects of educational quality, there are also disagreements and conflicts. For example, at the time of the Peer Learning Visit, in vocational education some unions had called for a strike.

Trade unions act against what they see as a diminishing of the professional autonomy of teachers, because of increased external control, a diminishing of trust, and "being reduced to a measuring instrument". From the position of school leaders and school governors there is fear of negative side effects in accountability policies. In the sense that schools may become more selective in student admission in order to look good on certain outcome indicators

2. Does the government have an explicit quality agenda, comprising targets and programmes that are to enhance the overall quality of education? If yes, provide a brief description.

The Dutch central government has explicit quality agendas for primary, secondary and upper secondary vocational education. These "quality agendas" are based on the Act on Primary Education (WPO and WEC), and the Act on Secondary Education (WVO). Quality Agendas exist for primary, secondary general and secondary vocational education, formulated by the Ministry of Education in 2007 and 2008.

Improved quality in basic school outcomes for language, arithmetic and mathematics is a common feature in the three Quality Agendas. New types of achievement outcomes are intended, like citizenship skills and competencies in secondary education and work related competencies in vocational education. Attainment aspects, in the sense of decreased early school leaving, are also included in the quality agendas. The proper functioning of teaching processes and schools as organisations are "throughput" issues that are emphasised as well. These can be monitored on the basis of the work from the Educational Inspectorate, which rates schools as regular, weak or very weak. The quality agendas also mention certain general classes of levers for quality improvement, these are: testing, achievement monitoring, examinations and quality care measures, teacher training, continuous professional development, evidence-based innovation and better alignment among different school types and education levels.

It should be noted that these Acts and government initiated programmes are to be seen as specifying general targets and conditions for quality enhancement, while the ultimate responsibility for educational quality resides with the schools. Requirements on, "Good Education and Good Governance" in the Law in primary and secondary education set additional conditions on the governance structure of primary and secondary schools. These requirements are expected to contribute to high educational quality, including student achievement outcomes.

More operational programmes that are to be seen as vehicles to reach the targets of the quality agendas, and action plans for better performance, are the programmes *Schools have the Initiative* (*School aan Zet)*, and the *Teachers' Agenda* (*Lerarenagenda*). "Schools have the Initiative" is based on an agreement between the Ministry of Education and the PO and VO Councils.

In this agreement the partners state that they give space and confidence to school boards to do the right things. Each school can make its own choice in improving its quality. Schools will not be burdened with additional accountability requirements. The responsibility lies with the school boards, which are expected to use their regular channels such as the annual school report. It is a three-year programme in primary and secondary education (2012-2015) and addresses the following themes like "achievement oriented work", HRM/learning organisations, achievement in basic skills, differentiation, excellence/gifted students, and promotion of Beta skills, science and technology.

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The "Teachers' Agenda" is aimed at the improvement of teacher quality, and covers: upgraded selection of students for teacher training, enhanced quality of teacher training, enhanced teacher competency in differentiated teaching and fostering "a strong profession" (teacher register and professional standards). The *Teachers' Agenda* will be re-addressed in the answer to question 11.

3. Are there any contrasting views on the meaning and interpretation of educational quality in your country, among key actors like: the central government/employers of education and trade unions? If yes, please briefly describe the contested issues.

Judging from the Agreements as described in the answers to questions 1 and 2 there is a general agreement between social partners and the Ministry of Education on the priorities of the Quality Agendas. This incorporates acceptance of educational outcomes as key performance indicators, as well as an agreement on a number of conditions (good governance, strengthening of the teaching profession) that are to be seen as supportive.

Despite this overall consensus one could say that there is a certain caution among some of the trade unions with respect to the above-school establishment of general learning standards (reference levels), and particularly to the summative use of performance assessment. For example, in an (undated) note of the Algemene Onderwijs Bond (AOB), the position is taken that deregulation and increased school autonomy have given more power to school managers but constrained the professional autonomy of teachers[11].

From the teaching field criticism is ventilated against educational testing which, according to these critics, have gone over the edge and is exaggerated. At the primary school level an action group; "Save primary education" expresses rabbinate opposition against mandatory performance testing.

Another debate has emerged in a recent report by the Education Council, the most important general advisory committee to the government, in which the current quality policies are described as "narrow" (Onderwijsraad, 2013: "A narrow view on Education Quality"). The council sees negative side effects on the current concentration on basic subjects, and educational testing of these basics (e.g teaching to the test). Instead, broader "Bildung", non-cognitive competencies and skills, as well as "twenty first century skills" are emphasised by the Council.

4. Have employers of education in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

Yes; In the Policy Agreement for Secondary Education[12] (already cited in the response to question 1) the VO council underlines the role of school leaders in enhancing the quality of education: "Good teachers are the prime agents in quality enhancement. Good school leaders enable teachers to do a good job, when they align HRM policies, finance and school organization with pedagogical and didactic goals" (p. 5). The VO-Council also states that it is currently active in the development of instruments to improve the professional development of school leaders (p. 8), such as mandatory training for school leaders, instruments for self-assessment and personal development. Specific targets for school leader competencies and competency development are formulated in the Agreement (p.19). Andersen and Krueger, commissioned by the VO Council, describe a competency profile for school leaders in the report "Competency Profile for School Leaders in Secondary education". The competency model that is presented has five core competencies, and confirms to the category of integrated school leadership models (See the conceptual paper).

The concept of "professional space" addresses the relationship of teachers and school leaders; the latter are expected to safeguard the professional autonomy of the former. On this particular issue there appears

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11   http://www.aob.nl/kixtart/modules/absolutenm/articlefiles/6048-Profstat.pdf

12   http://www.vo-raad.nl/userfiles/bestanden/Bestuursakkoord/20111214-Bestuursakkoord-VO-raad-OCW.pdf

to be alignment with the Educational Cooperation, in which the teacher unions are represented.

In the Policy Agreement for Primary Education (2012-2015) the PO-Council mentions the quality action plan and teacher policies (Teachers 2020) as joint ambitions between the Ministry of Education and the Council. The aim of the Policy Agreement is to enhance student performance in primary education. Part of the Agreement entails the delegation of authority to school boards and putting the PO –Council in the position of educational employer; this is described under the heading of "More space for school boards". Like the Agreement for Secondary Education the professional development of school leaders including competency requirements is one of the explicit targets. By 2015 a school leader register should be operational. In 2013, about half of the school leaders in primary education had registered. http://www.poraad.nl/files/bestuursakkoordgetekend.pdf
The PO-Council has founded a "School leaders Chamber"[13]. In this Chamber, school leaders from 30 school boards, which are members of the PO-Council, meet to discuss topics of common interest. Examples are, among others "result oriented leadership". The PO-Council currently organises master classes on Governance and Leadership.

5. Have trade unions in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

Trade unions for teachers and other educational organisations in the Netherlands collaborate under the Education Cooperation. This body was founded in 2011 and deals with the central government on issues regarding the position of teachers.
In May 2012, the Education Cooperation signed a Policy Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education. For the government the Education Cooperation is seen as the partner and council for all issues that involve the professional quality of teachers. The teacher register, in which teachers can register their competencies, is one of the prime achievements of this Policy Agreement.
On the issue of "professional space", teacher policies meet school leader policies, as trade unions tend to be weary of limitations of teacher autonomy due to stronger involvement of school managers and school governors. ETUCE, as the international organisation of trade unions in education, has formulated an explicit vision on school leadership. In this vision the professional autonomy of teachers is guaranteed on the basis of leadership styles that respect and exploit the professional autonomy of teachers (ETUCE, 2012a, 2012b). The Education Cooperation is also involved with the School leaders register for Primary Education.[14]

The Education Cooperation is a partner on issues like "Professional space" and school leader registers, which are ultimately expected to contribute to the enhancement of educational quality. Additionally, specific trade unions emphasise specific orientations to educational leadership. For example, the CNV union emphasises a strong HRM orientation in educational leadership. In comparison to the employers of education, the trade unions appear less explicit in formulating leadership policies.

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13   http://www.poraad.nl/content/schoolleiderskamer
14   https://www.onderwijscooperatie.nl/leraren-gesprek-schoolleidersregister-po/

6. The table below indicates school autonomy in two domains, expressed as percentages of decisions taken by the school. The two domains are resource allocation and curriculum and assessment policies. For the Netherlands and the UK, on the basis of your information and knowledge, would you say these figures are correct? For Malta: could you provide estimates?[15]. Note: the figures for Italy are just provided for illustrative purpose.

	Resources	Curriculum
Netherlands	85%	91%
UK	76%	80%
Italy	27%	64%
Malta		

Data source: PISA 2012 (OECD, 2013)[16], p.383 Percentage of decisions taken by the school in the domains resources and curriculum

The large autonomy of Dutch schools in comparison to other countries is corroborated from other sources (OECD, 2008, Education at a Glance, p 485, and EURYDICE, 2008)[17]. In the table presented above the data was obtained from the PISA school questionnaire, i.e. responses from school principals. The information on this issue presented in Education at a Glance, (2008) was based on responses from national panels that indicated which number of all decisions in a particular domain (organisation of instruction, personnel policies, planning and structures and use of resources) was made at different administrative levels (see the Annex to the Conceptual Paper).

The data in EAG (2008) indicate that in the Netherlands in the domain of organisation of instruction 89% of all decisions are made by the school, and 11% by the central government. In the domain of personnel policies 88% of the decisions were made by the school, and in the domains of planning and structures and resources– 100% of the decisions were made by the school. Generalised across four domains, 94% of all decisions in the Netherlands were taken by the school and 6% by the central government. The results presented in the EURYDICE report titled "Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of Teachers in Europe" are based on responses from national correspondents. Miscellaneous results from the EURYDICE study show that the Netherlands is among few countries in which schools have full autonomy regarding the content of the compulsory minimum curriculum at the primary and lower secondary level (p. 18). They are also completely free in determining the time spent on professional development (p 48) and have minimal binding regulations as far as teamwork within schools is concerned (p 43).

It should be noted that these figures do not differentiate between different decision makers at the school level, namely the school board, school leadership and teachers; teacher autonomy is addressed in question 10.

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15   The figures are based on the 2012 wave of OECD's PISA study and Malta did not participate in this study
16   OECD, (2014) PISA 2012 Results: What students know and can do. Volume I. Paris: OECD publishing
17   OECD, (2008) Education at a Glance. Paris: OECD publishing. EURIDYCE: (2008) Levels of autonomy and responsibility of teachers in Europe. http://www.aic.lv/rp/gramatas/2008_Eurydice_autonomy_of_Teachers.pdf

7. Do the schools in your country have school boards (,in the sense of a distinct decision making level "above" the school? (If the answer is no, please skip the next question)

Yes; in the Netherlands school boards are the "competent authorities" of the school.
 School boards are constituted locally and there is little information nationally regarding the qualifications of school board staff; school governors may be volunteers or professionals. They may be parents of students in the school, citizens from the local community, members of a religious or life philosophy, or professionals with specific expertise such as law, finance, HRM or education. Hence, especially on smaller school boards, there may not be any staff with an educational background. The recent (2010) legislation on "Good Education, Good Governance" has significantly strengthened the role of school boards for quality enhancement (Scheerens et al., 2012). This has also led to the strengthening of the role of the national "intermediary" or umbrella organisations, the Primary and Secondary Education Councils (PO-raad[18] and VO-raad[19]), which are the national associations of schools boards of primary and secondary education (OECD, 2014).

Regarding the functioning of school boards in the Netherlands (OECD, 2014, in a review of educational evaluation and assessment in the Netherlands), the OECD examiners write the following:

"School boards particularly have very uneven capacities and this is exacerbated by the fact that these bodies may have very different legal status, size and scope of responsibility given the fact that those who have created and are supervising them (e.g. religious communities or municipalities) enjoy large freedom in the way they regulate their remits and operational procedures. The members of school boards are typically laypersons who may lack the capacity to conduct evaluation with appropriate professionalism and the size of their permanent staff is often quite small. While some school boards formulate ambitious performance demands and exert pressure on their schools to improve, others seem to be less committed to quality goals and do not make appropriate efforts to raise quality ambitions".

In one of the few Dutch empirical studies on the functioning of school boards Hooge and Honing (2014), the study states that the *Good Education Good Quality Act* (Staatsblad, 2010) holds school boards ultimately responsible for guaranteeing educational quality. They state that almost all primary schools are now publicly financed and privately run (from local government to school boards). They estimate that school boards consist of about 50% parents consisting mostly of highly educated men. Two sixths of the school boards do not consist of parents, but of at least 1 professional governor, supplemented with voluntary governors. School board members are appointed, and therefore are more like trustees rather than representatives. Appointments occur by co-optation. Paid professional governors are appointed by their internal supervisors (Raad van Toezicht). According to Hooge and Honing schools in the Netherlands lack democratic accountability

In their study they focus on basic prerequisites of school boards capable of managing educational quality. It is namely the question whether school boards have a picture of the quality of the service delivery of their school. They conclude that 'in general school boards in primary education are aware of the quality of their school.

18   See the website of PO-Raad (The Primary Education Council) here: http://www.poraad.nl
19   See the website of VO-raad (The Secondary Education Council) here: http://www.vo-raad.nl

8. Please indicate with a percentage the following priority areas in what is formally expected from primary and secondary school boards in your country: (high percentages indicate high priority)

    a. Supervising financial affairs   30 %
    b. Supervising personnel policies   20 %
    c. Taking responsibility for legal issues   20 %
    d. Monitoring and stimulating the quality of school education   30 %
    e. Other issues   0 %
    (the percentages for these priority areas should sum up to 100%)

    Note: The question asks about what is expected. When the question would be asked what actually happens there would be stronger emphasis on financial and legal affairs and less on monitoring and stimulating quality (Hooge & Honingh, 2014).[20]

9. Would you say that the degree to which school boards and school governors are expected to be responsible for school quality is increasing or decreasing?

    a. Increasing
    The policy agreements between the government and the social partners in education are devolving more responsibilities to school boards. School boards are held ultimately responsible for the quality of schools. This is also evident from the revised supervision frameworks of the Inspectorate of Education[21] (Scheerens et al., 2012)[22]. One way of conceptualising this new responsibility might be to expect school boards to, stimulate and facilitate school leadership behaviour which, in its turn, facilitates effective teaching and improved student outcomes. Undesired side effects might be a duplication of managerial roles, more managerial overhead and increased bureaucracy.

10. How autonomous are teachers in your country in terms of the degree to which they have decision-making authority in the domains of: a) curriculum and instruction and b) student policies?

    Unfortunately the recent OECD reports on PISA lumped together school boards, school managers and teachers, in their indicators on autonomy. Only a thematic report based on PISA 2000 separates these school level decision-makers (OECD, 2005)[23]. In this thematic report teacher autonomy in the domains of curriculum and instruction[24] and student policies[25] is established. Results for the Netherlands are presented in the table below. The figures are percentages of students in schools where the actors in question have some responsibility for the domain in question (in this case curriculum & instruction and student policies).

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20 Hooge, E.H., & Honingh, M.E. (2014). Are school boards aware of the educational quality of their schools? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.*

21 http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2014/06/19/country-background-report.html

22 J. Scheerens, et al. (2012) OECD review on Educational Evaluation and Assessment. Country background report the Netherlands.. Enschede: University of Twente.

23 Luyten, H., Scheerens J., and others. (2005) School factors related to quality and equity. Results from PISA 2000. Paris: OECD

24 choosing which textbooks are used, determining course content and deciding which courses are offered

25 establishing student disciplinary policies, establishing student assessment policies and approving students for admission to the school)

Curriculum and instruction

	School board	School principal	Department Head	Teachers
NL	4,9%	38,5%	27,4%	25%
OECD average	12,1%	24,3%	22,4%	18,8%

Source: OECD, 2005, p136

Student policies

	School board	School principal	Department Head	Teachers
NL	3,6%	80%	14,1%	2,4%
OECD average	24,5%	49,5%	8%	7,1%

Source: OECD, 2005, p135

These figures indicate that school principals generally have more responsibility for these domains than teachers.

In the earlier cited report from EURYDICE, more recent information on teacher autonomy in an international perspective is available (EURYDICE, 2008). Some miscellaneous results from this report are as follows:
- Since 1993 an overall decrease of teacher autonomy in the Netherlands (p. 10)
- Full autonomy of Dutch teachers regarding the content of the compulsory curriculum (p. 18)
- Full autonomy of Dutch teachers in determining teaching methods (pg. 26)
- Teachers not involved in the choice of school text books (determined by the principal, p. 28)
- Teachers not involved in determining the criteria for internal student assessment (p. 32)
- Teachers, individually or collectively determining whether a pupil should repeat a year (p. 34)

In summary, the degree of autonomy of Dutch teachers does not appear to differ strongly from the overall (international) pattern. From this report one gets the impression that, where the Netherlands are world champions in *school* autonomy, it is average in *teacher* autonomy.

When it comes to more subjective impressions of the degree to which Dutch teachers experience being autonomous, the education journals often refer to constraints of autonomy caused by mandatory testing and school inspection. This issue will be re-addressed when discussing accountability issues further on.

From the side of the trade unions in the Netherlands it was pointed out, during the Peer Learning Visit organised for this project in the Netherlands on 25 April 2014, that there is a problem of uncertified teaching in the Netherlands, 1/6 of all lessons would be provided by unqualified teachers. In discussion with the representatives from other countries (Sweden, Finland), issues of low self-esteem of the teachers, career opportunities and early departure of young teachers were discussed. International data show that the Netherlands is relatively weak on induction and the support of beginning teachers by schools.

The workload of teachers can also be related to recent expectations concerning issues like: peer learning and cooperation, teachers as researchers, contribution to school improvement and ICT.

11. *Does your country have a national programme to enhance teacher professionlisation?*

In May 2011, government policy to stimulate the quality of teachers and teaching was expressed in the report *Teachers 2020, a powerful profession.* It should be noted that this policy document was prepared in agreement with the social partners, united in the Foundation for Education (see the reply to question 1). Three "lines of action" are described in the document: a) further professionalisation of teachers, as well as principals, b) the establishment of a teacher register, intensified HRM policies and practices in schools and c) further quality improvement of initial teacher training (including entrance tests). The role of school leaders in stimulating educational quality together with teachers is described in terms of stimulating "educational leadership", and "integral HRM policy" (p. 4).[26]

These plans have been further developed in a concrete programme of action under the heading "The Teachers' Agenda, 2013 – 2020". The "Teachers' Agenda" is aimed at improvement of teacher quality, and covers: upgraded selection of students for teacher training, enhanced quality of teacher training, enhanced teacher competency in differentiated teaching and fostering "a strong profession" (teacher register, and professional standards). Peer learning among teachers is also emphasised.

In both policy documents the involvement of employers of education and trade unions is clearly present. The employers of education are given an important role in implementing the action lines of *Teachers 2020, a powerful profession,* particularly with regards to finance. The so called "Achievement Box", which regulates extra funding for actions oriented towards performance improvement, and facets of HRM policy such as development of the so called "Function Mix" (task differentiation and differentiation of salary scales). Trade unions are also consulted on these issues, while their role with respect to the teachers' register has already been underlined in the reply to earlier questions.

A final remark pertains to merit pay of teachers, mentioned in the 2011 report. It appears that the proposals to design pilot projects on merit pay have been abolished due to strong resistance from the field.

12. *How is school performance monitored in your country:*

a. By means of quantitative outcome indicators, based on examinations and/or achievement tests
b. By means of school inspection
c. **By means of a combination of quantitative outcome indicators and inspections**
d. In another way (please describe)

The description below is cited from the OECD report on a country review on educational evaluation and assessment in the Netherlands (OECD, 2014).

"There is no legal obligation for schools to evaluate themselves, but they are required to draw up a school prospectus, an annual report and a four-year school plan, which is typically based on an internal review of school quality. Schools benefit from analytical software systems and benchmarked data, and can choose to buy supporting materials and services from different providers. The Inspectorate conducts external evaluations every four years, with the type and intensity of inspection depending on identified risks in each school. Schools that are considered at risk of underperformance are evaluated more frequently and more thoroughly than others. The initial risk analysis is based on a review of each school's outcomes, annual accounts and "failure signals", such as complaints. For its inspection visits, the Inspectorate uses a detailed framework of quality indicators and a clear set of decision rules. As part of this framework, the Inspectorate of Education also evaluates the internal quality care undertaken by schools themselves. A range of different databases providing school-level information and performance indicators are connected and made available to different audiences through the online information system *Windows for Accountability.*

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26   http://www.hetkaninhetonderwijs.nl/content/actieplan-leraar-2020-een-krachtig-beroep

The Inspectorate publishes its Inspection Reports, as well as *School Quality Cards*, which provide information about the inspection regime schools are assigned to".

The OECD examiners report in favourable terms regarding the strong facilities and instruments for school evaluation in the Netherlands. A recent development is that the school leavers test at the end of the primary school programme has become mandatory, and will be used as a basis for quality judgements about schools' performances. This development has been met with some resistance from the field, and there is an on going debate about the use of educational testing.

13. What are the ultimate consequences of below standard school performances: (more than one alternative may be checked)

    a. Closure of the school
    b. Financial sanctions
    c. Public announcement of sub-standard performance
    d. An intensified monitoring regime
    e. Temporary extra external support to improve future performance
    f. Other, please describe

As indicated, several consequences may occur.

The most frequently occurring consequence of a school's below standard performance (as established from school inspection) is an intensified monitoring regime. But, quite recently, in extreme cases, more severe measures of financial sanctions and school closure may be applied.

The Inspectorate of Education follows an approach that is described as "proportional inspection". Based on an initial screening, schools are categorised as regular, weak, or very weak. Weak and very weak schools are submitted to an intensified monitoring regime, and tight targets for improvement are stated. In the case a school does not improve, sanctions may be enacted, such as official warnings, administrative and/or financial sanctions (Inspectorate of Education, 2009)[27]. Sanctions can be enacted when the school fails to meet minimum student achievement results and fails to meet legal requirements as specified in the Act on Primary Education (WPO and WEC), the Act on Secondary Education (WPO and WVO), and the Act on 'Good Education, Good Governance'. The Department of Education decides on the sanctioning of schools (Scheerens et al., 2012).

Inspectorate currently publishes the inspection regime a school is submitted to, whether the school is considered regular, weak, or very weak. The practice of more informative "quality cards" has been abandoned. Yet, several newspapers annually publish performance indicators on all primary and secondary schools in the country.

A more recent orientation in evaluating school performance is to identify *excellent* schools. A special committee is currently reviewing schools that want to apply for recognition in excellence, while the inspectorate is considering adapting its supervision frameworks to identify excellent schools in more objective ways (Scheerens, 2012).

14. Which priority ordering would apply to your country as far as emphasis in school accountability is concerned:

    a. Oriented to inform higher administrative levels (3)
    b. Oriented to support parents' choice of schools (2)
    c. Oriented to internal and professional feedback (1)

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27 Inspectie van het Onderwijs (2009). Onderwijsverslag 2008. Utrecht: Inspectie voor het onderwijs

Even in the most formalized case, namely proportional inspection, feedback to schools and teachers appears to be more important than informing parents and higher administrative levels. Only in extreme cases, when school closure would be proposed, the Ministry of Education, as the highest administrative level, would become involved. A consequence of more pronounced authority separation between the school board and school management would be that alternative a) might become plausible.

It should be noted that following the policy document "Education, Good Governance", schools are submitted to a dual accountability system: external accountability, school inspection, and internal accountability through school internal supervision boards. The terms that are employed for this dual accountability system are vertical and horizontal accountability.

"Good Education and Good Governance" underlines the responsibilities of the School Board for realising good educational quality and urges for a clear delineation of horizontal and vertical accountability. Horizontal accountability refers to the school's duty to inform the local environment of schools and various external stakeholders. Vertical accountability operates by way of external school inspection. A further important element in the new directions for governance is the requirement to stimulate the "voice" of parents and students. This is laid down in the law on participation (WMS)".[28] (Scheerens et al., 2012)

15. Is the accountability regime in the field of education generally accepted or contested, in your country?

It is generally accepted (☐)
It is contested (☑)
If it is contested, on which grounds? You may want to refer to the following possible issues:
   ☑ **A narrowing impact on school priorities (teaching to the test)**
   ☐ Disadvantages of low stakes testing (students' not making a real effort)
   ☑ **Limitations to the professional autonomy of schools and teachers)**

There is general appreciation of the work of the Inspectorate (Valk & Van der Wouden, 2013)[29]. Primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands have decided to use tests themselves (they pay for the school leavers test at the end of primary school and for the CITO pupil monitoring system), and there are occasionally loud sounds of protest against and alleged "test frenzy". An example is the publication by Radersma & Van der Weijden. "Survive the educational Inspectorate" (Overleef de onderwijsinspectie; Boom-uitgeverij), 2013. Arguments that are raised against the current regime of school Inspection and testing are: a narrow interpretation of educational goals, a " culture of being held accountable" (Dutch: *afrekencultuur)*, increased bureaucracy and external interference with autonomous schools and teachers. In a review of these protests, Appelhof (2014)[30] provides counter arguments, on the success of Proportional Inspection to diminish the number of weak performing schools.

16. On the basis of research studies (and if these are not available on the basis of your experience), how would you estimate the amount of working time the average school leader in your country spends on the following activities: (please indicate by means of percentages, summing to 100)

a.	Representative duties	5%
b.	Administrative tasks	35%
c.	Coordinating and monitoring teaching and learning	20%

28   Source: Governance in het Onderwijs. Tweede Kamer Vergaderingen 2004-2005
29   Valk, R.; Wouden, L., van der. (2013). Gevraagd: vaste inspecteurs die vaker langskomen. Scholen verdeeld over oerzicht door de Onderwijsinspectie. *Van twaalf tot achttien*, jrg. 23, dec., 2013, pp. 8- 13.
30   Appelhof, P. (2014) Dankzij de Inspectie minder zwakke scholen. Utrecht: Oberon

d. Active interaction with external stake-holders   30%
e. Human resources management and human resources development of staff   10%
f. Other duties, please describe

Existing information: see figure 4 cited from Vidoni, (2008)[31]

Figure 4: Average head-teacher time allocation in management and leadership activities
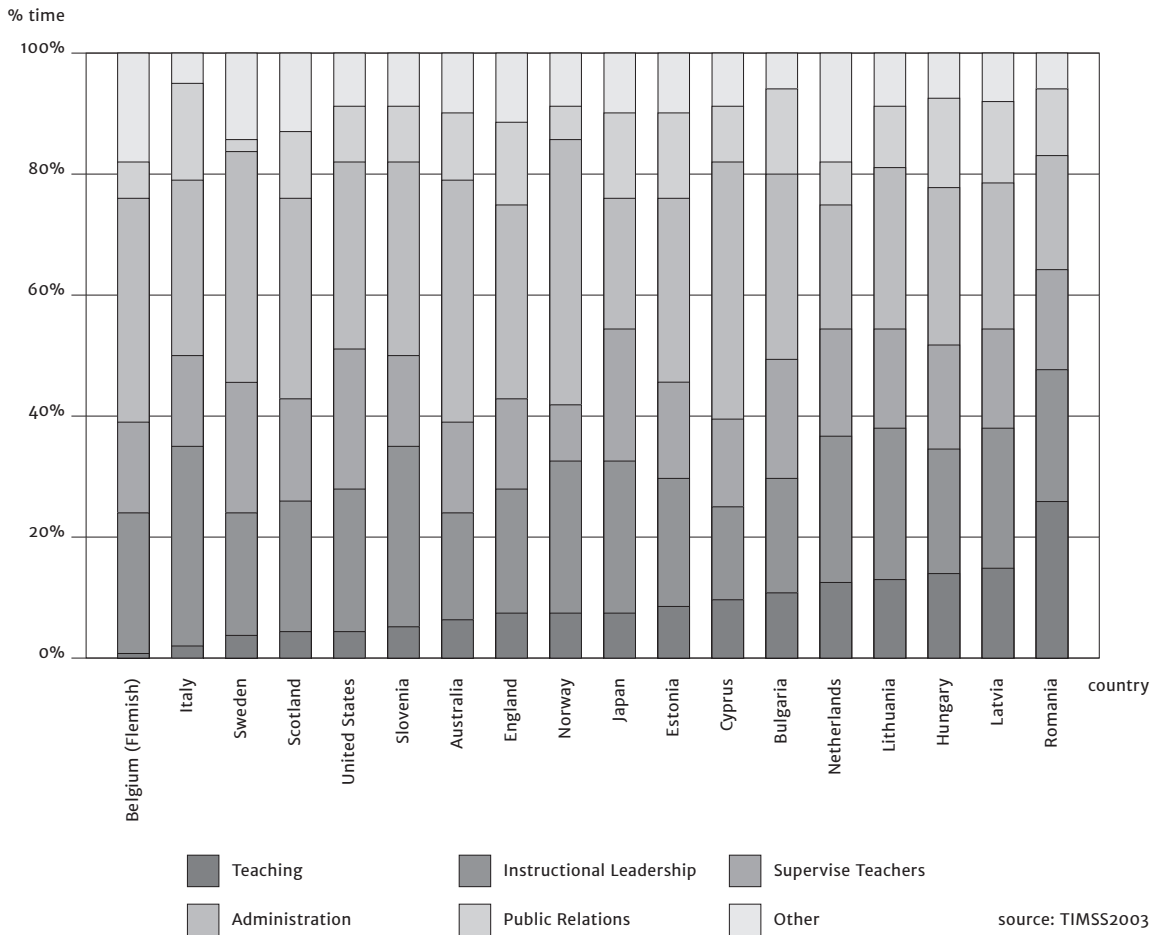
According to this table the Netherlands (fifth column from the right) holds no extreme position on any of the leadership tasks. Administrative duties are rated relatively low, PR activities relatively high. Moreover, differences between countries appear to be relatively limited.

According to an older Dutch study, school leaders in primary education state that administrative duties take up a disproportionate amount of time (Regioplan, 2000, p.133). The study underlines the heavy work pressure for school managers due to the many externally induced changes. The authors note that parents require an increasing amount of time from school managers. In secondary schools directors attend to strategic issues, and have increased responsibilities with respect to financial resources management. Deputy directors are more concerned with educational matters (Regioplan/ITS, 2000, Taken en Werkdruk

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31   Vidoni, D. (2008) The Role of School Leadership on Student Achievement, Evidence from TIMSS 2003. Boston College.

Managers in PO, VO en BE)[32].

From a study by B&A Consulting, an overview was given of the increased burden for school leaders in administrative and financial accounting to a range of external partners, the Ministry of Education, VO and PO-Council, the Inspectorate, DUO and the school board (B&A Consulting, 2010).

The survey conducted by ETUCE, ETUCE (2012a, p 36) provides data that indicate the predominance of administrative and managerial duties over pedagogical leadership. It is difficult to obtain objective data on the way school leaders actually spend their time working. All studies that were reviewed are based on self-reports. Given the increased demands in the majority of areas: administrative, financial, human resources management and educational leadership, it is unlikely that any area could get disproportionate attention. The degree to which external demands are "inescapable" might be the best predictor of actual time preferences for certain areas, which could imply that a real trade-off exists between administrative duties and educational leadership.

During the Peer Learning Visit organised for this project in the Netherlands on 25 April 2014, this overall picture was made clear and two issues emerged from the discussion:
- Relatively high administrative burden was recognised, and the main reasons were mentioned: increased demands from school boards, and accountability requirements.
- Integrative leadership was also emphasised, expectations of school leaders in fields like human relations development and management, the coaching of teachers, and curriculum development.

17. Would you please give a rank-ordering of school leadership orientations as they represent emphasis given in your country to certain orientations:

a. instructional leadership (primarily oriented toward optimizing the teaching and learning programme) **3**
b. transactional leadership (primarily oriented to school improvement and organisation development) **4**
c. integral leadership, in the sense of a combination of instructional and transactional leadership **2**
d. integral leadership in the sense of a broad spectrum of orientations (internal productivity, responsiveness to external stakeholders, human relations orientation, and creating functional cultural and structural conditions) **1**

Given the high autonomy of schools, the complexity of the governance environment; the many facetted ambitions for improvement, as expressed in the diverse Agreements between the government and the social partners, require a broad set of leadership competencies. The degree to which this is working in educational practice is sometimes questioned. De Wit, 2006, discusses the "illusions" of integral school leadership.[33]

18. On the basis of your own experience or research studies, how would you rate the frequency of application of distributed leadership in primary and secondary schools in you country:

a. happens in all schools
b. happens in about 75% of the schools
c. happens in about 50% of the schools
d. happens in about 25% of the schools
e. does not occur at all

Results from PISA 2009 indicate that in the Netherlands 86% of students are in schools where principals say

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32 http://www.arbeidenoverheid.nl/media/23162/298%20Regioplan%20%282000%29%20Taken%20
en%20werkdruk%20managers%20in%20PO,%20VO%20en%20BVE.pdf
33 https://www.avs.nl/artikelen/illusiesvanintegraalschoolleiderschap

that they discuss problems with teachers quite often or very often. This indicator on teacher participation in the Netherlands is below the OECD average of 94%. (OECD, 2010, p 100)[34]

PISA 2012 results indicate that the relationship between school autonomy and performance in mathematics varies according to the degree to which principals collaborate with teachers throughout the system. In systems where teachers and principals collaborate more frequently in managing schools, autonomy is positively related to mathematics performance (OECD, 2014, Part IV, Chtr. 1, and page 139). The study reports on an index of school management and teacher participation. The Netherlands score is below average, in the lowest quarter of the country-distribution (OECD, 2013, fig IV 4.6, p.140)[35].

Judging from this data the Netherlands is relatively low on indicators of participative leadership, as compared to other countries. Yet, it should be noted that in more absolute terms practically all countries score relatively high on these indicators.

Although distributive leadership is underlined in reports from international organisations that represent employers in education and in particular trade unions (ETUCE, 2012a, 2012b)[36], distributed leadership is not getting the attention in Dutch reports from these organisations.

Given the lack of empirical research no estimate can be given about the frequency of application of distributed leadership in Dutch primary and secondary schools.

19. Please indicate the priority given to certain strategies to enhance educational quality by different actors and stakeholders (by rank-ordering from 1 to 5, each of the alternative strategies, from the perspective of each stakeholder):

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	Central government	Local school boards	School leaders	Trade unions	Employers, other than central government	Teachers
Personnel policies, teacher empowerment	2	1	3	1	3	1
Curriculum alignment and opportunity to learn	5	5	5	5	5	4
Formative assessment	1	3	2	2	2	3
Implementation of effective teaching strategies	4	4	4	3	4	2
Pronounced leadership orientations	3	2	1	4	1	5

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34   OECD (2010) PISA 2009 results; What makes a school successful. Volume IV

35   The score for the Netherlands on this index is -.19

36   ETUCE, (2012) ETUCE paper on school leadership. ETUCE Budapest 27 November ETUCE (2012a ETUCE School Leader Survey. Brussels, 2012

This rating is global and subjective. The following arguments were used:

- none of the agents seem to pay much attention to curriculum and opportunity to learn issues; this is in line with the Dutch tradition of "freedom of education" and opposition against "state pedagogy";
- formative assessment is placed relatively high on the agenda of most of the agents;
- to a similar degree this is the case for personnel policies and teacher empowerment;
- implementation of effective teaching strategies is to a large degree the exclusive domain of acting teachers;
- agents in the realms of management and governance as well as employers might tend to emphasise pronounced leadership orientations;
- central government in the Netherlands underlines all strategies; formative assessment is assigned first priority, because it is a central element in "achievement oriented work" propagated by the government.

20. What are the proven governance and leadership successes and good practices in your country, as it comes to identifying critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness at different levels of responsibility: school governors, principals and teachers? And, alternatively, what are the problematic areas and "blank spots" in different settings?

According to the work programme for this project the central issue is "the role of employers and teacher-unions in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising educational quality, by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations." As it comes to identifying strengths and weaknesses in the way this theme is being addressed in the Netherlands, the following input to the discussion can be given, based on the answers to the questionnaire: Competences are (1) the participation of social partners in a comprehensive set of policy programmes for improving the quality of education, (2) the fact that these programmes have formulated explicit targets and performance standards and are therefore also assessable and (3) that the contents of these programmes globally confirm to the knowledge base on educational effectiveness and school improvement. A deficiency is the complexity and lack of efficiency of the overall structure and the improvement processes.

1. The fact that major stake holders, particularly the social partners, cooperate with the central government in national agreements on improving the quality of education, provides a basis for good overall commitment to these programmes.
2. The fact that quality agendas and improvement programmes have all set explicit targets and empirically verifiable performance standards is an important pre-condition for their ultimate effectiveness (in the sense of a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition).
3. The comprehensiveness and contents of the improvement programmes is globally in line with the state of the art in the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement (Scheerens, 2013) [37][38]. This means that important levers for improvement, in the sense of personnel policies, evaluation and feedback, effective teaching and educational organisation and management arrangements are all included. All parties recognise school leadership as one of the elements in this comprehensive improvement agenda.
4. The complexity of educational policy in the Netherlands is based on the constitutionally guaranteed "freedom of education" on one hand and a permanent constitutional duty to care for education and to oversee the compliance and quality of education on the other (Frissen, et al., 2013)[39]. The structure of educational organisations, described in the preamble, has traditionally operated as an intermediary layer between central government and autonomous schools. The current structure, with a central role for the PO- and VO-Councils, is to be seen as a modernisation of this traditional structure of educational

37   J. Scheerens (2013) What is Effective Schooling. Paper for the International Baccalaureate Organization. Washington.
38   http://www.ibo.org/research/resources/documents/WhatisEffectiveSchoolingFINAL.pdf
39   Frissen, P.H.A., Hofman, R.H. and Peters, R. "Het ongemak van autonomie;" BOPO review studie. GION

organisations. It is important to note that this structure was not invented to enhance educational effectiveness, but should be regarded as a culturally and historical "given". Although the answers provided in this paper point at the generally constructive operation of this structure with respect to quality enhancement, its efficiency can be put into question, because of its great structural complexity, duplication of functions (e.g. the arrangements for horizontal and vertical accountability), and inefficient operational strategies. The particular position of school boards, given a possible imbalance between increased responsibility and know how deserves further study. Inherent tensions between central impulses for quality improvement and accountability, and school autonomy on the other hand have led to improvement strategies characterized as bottom up, with the danger of re-inventing the wheel over and over again, and severe limitations to better controlled evidence based reforms (OECD, 2014[40], Scheerens and Doolaard, 2013)[41].

During the Peer Learning Visit organised for this project in the Netherlands in April, 2014, chairman Sjoerd Slager quoted McKinsey with the phrase: "strong autonomy limits progress". The Dutch approach to innovation depends strongly on relatively small networks of schools that, often with consultants, support organisations or universities, tackle complex issues. For example, how to deal with gifted children. In this way, even if good practices may be discovered, mechanisms for dissemination are generally lacking. This is clearly a limit to the learning potential of the system, as far as improvement and innovation is concerned. Another area where school autonomy "gets in the way" of efficient progress, are the difficulties to evidence based work, because schools frequently refuse to cooperate in experiments and summative evaluations. The use and adoption of educational research is also an issue of "continuing concern" in the Netherlands. Finally, some doubt may be raised with respect to the double evaluation procedures that exist: particularly with respect to what is known as vertical (inspection) versus horizontal accountability (under the responsibility of the schools).

The basic assumption behind this project is that administrative units and social partners at the national system level, and school boards and school leaders at school level, influence the quality of education positively. In a recent study by the Inspectorate of Education, (March 2014)[42] empirical support for some of the links in this long "causal chain" have been reported. The quality of school boards appeared to correlate positively with the quality of school leaders, which in turn appeared to correlate positively with teaching quality. All measures and quality judgments were made on the basis of structured school inspections. The study concluded that both school boards and school leaders are best in their more traditional tasks, but that improvement is required in areas like making use of data, and using data for school improvement purposes. Effectiveness regarding the functioning of school boards was creating supportive conditions and continuity in personnel matters. Deficiencies were setting attainment targets, monitoring whether these targets are actually implemented and analyses and interpretation of attainment indicators. School leaders appeared to be strongest in the day- to- day running of schools and in need of improvement in data based management and improvement of the school.

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40   "While freedom of education enables schools to undertake their own experiments in relation to evaluation and assessment, these are typically not documented and collaboration among schools tends to be local, for example within one school board. A consequence is that the existing knowledge and information on evaluation and assessment may easily be lost, schools may spend unnecessary time on "re-inventing the wheel" and there is little system learning over time. Without a strategy to effectively support, leverage and disseminate local innovations, many promising ideas will remain localised or even fade away for lack of external support".

41   Scheerens J., and Doolaard S. (2013). Review studie Onderwijskwaliteit. Groningen: GION

42   Inspectie van het Onderwijs (March, 2014) De kwaliteit van schoolleiders in basis-, speciaal en voortgezet onderwijs. Utrecht: Inspectie van het Onderwijs. http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/content/assets/Documents+algemeen/2014/20140326-definitief-rapport-themaonderzoek-schoolleiding.pdf

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Chapter 4: Case study Malta

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*This case study is based on the answers to the Questionnaire, discussed by the national task
force, and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 10 and 11 June 2014.*

Preamble: the Maltese Educational System

Population

Malta is made up of a group of small islands, two of which are inhabited. The larger island is Malta and the second island is Gozo. Malta lies 93 kilometers to the south of Sicily and 290 kilometers to the north of the African coast. Its position in the middle of the Mediterranean and its natural harbours has attracted a number of colonial powers to take possession of the islands. As a result, Malta has an extremely rich inheritance.

With a population estimated around 422,000 people, Malta has the highest population density in Europe, averaging 1,200 persons per square kilometre (NSO, 2013). Overall population figures are considerably increased by heavy tourist inflows (estimated at around 1.4 million for 2012). Malta is a small nation with a distinctive language (predominantly semitic) and culture. History and geography made its population cosmopolitan, while a flourishing tourist industry continues to reinforce this national trait.

Economy

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Malta expanded 0.40 percent in the fourth quarter of 2013 over the previous quarter. GDP Growth Rate in Malta averaged 0.45% from 2000 until 2013, reaching an all time high of 4.10% in the first quarter of 2002, and a record low of −3.40% in the first quarter of 2009. The Eurostat reports GDP Growth Rate in Malta.

Malta's economy is dependent on foreign trade (serving as a freight trans-shipment point), manufacturing of electronics and textiles, tourism and financial services. Tourism has flourished over the years and now accounts for around 35% of Malta's Gross Domestic Product. As Malta currently offers a low-cost environment and an advantageous tax regime, it has become an attractive destination for those in the finance industry interested in an EU-compliant domicile. Malta joined the European Union in 2004.

Malta – the smallest economy in the euro zone – produces only about 20% of its food needs, has limited fresh water supplies, and has few domestic energy sources. Malta's geographic position between Europe and North Africa makes it a target for irregular migration, which has strained Malta's political and economic resources. Malta's fertility rate is below the EU average, and population growth in recent years has largely been from immigration, putting increasing pressure on the pension system. Malta adopted the euro on the 1st January 2008. Malta's economy is dependent on foreign trade, manufacturing, and tourism, and was hurt by the global economic downturn. Malta has low unemployment rates relative to other European countries, and growth has recovered since the 2009 recession. Malta's financial services industry has grown in recent years and has avoided contagion from the European financial crisis, largely because its debt is mostly held domestically and its banks have low exposure to the sovereign debt of peripheral European countries. Malta reduced its deficit below 3% of GDP, leading the EU to dismiss its official excessive deficit procedure against Malta in 2012.

Main features of the school system

The Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) is responsible for education in Malta. Two main premises-equity and quality underscore the Government's education policy. This commitment is evidenced by an inclusive policy at all levels of education and the provision of free education from kindergarten to tertiary education in public schools. The Government also subsidises Church schools, which do not charge tuition fees, and gives tax rebates to parents sending their children to private schools. Compulsory education covers the ages 5 to 16 years and is divided into two main cycles; primary education (5 – 11 years) and secondary education (11 – 16 years). Prior to the beginning of primary education there are provisions of child-day care (ages 0 – 3 years) and kindergarten education for children aged 3 to 5 years. Although not compulsory, around 98% of 4 year olds attend kindergarten. Alongside the public education sector, there is also a non-state sector (i.e. Church and Independent schools), which accounts for nearly 40% of the student cohort. The two sectors work in close partnership in providing a quality education to all students. Following compulsory education students can choose to follow either a general education or a vocational education path (see figure 5).

Tertiary education is provided at the University of Malta and at the Malta Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology, the latter specialising in vocational degrees. Private providers run both during the day and also as evening classes both in state educational institutions as well as Lifelong Learning courses for adult learners. Some of the courses are run in collaboration with Local Councils to facilitate accessibility to adult learners. Courses cover a wide array of subjects and topics and can be followed to acquire formal qualifications or for personal self-development.

This paper begins by acknowledging a number of points. First, it acknowledges the importance of shared governance and the role that different stakeholders can play to ensure that all Maltese children succeed (FACTS, 2005). Second, it respects the context in which we have been working in, namely a top-down approach to change, with reforms being mandated by the education authorities. Third, we recognise the difficulties that a more collaborative stance brings to the reform debate. Lastly, that the context we are working in is one which is in a state of flux as the changes, identified by the Education Act of 2006, are still being implemented and that new reforms and changes are being considered (such as amendments to the existing Act, and more recently the Minister's recommendation to start debating on a national level raising school-leaving age to 18).
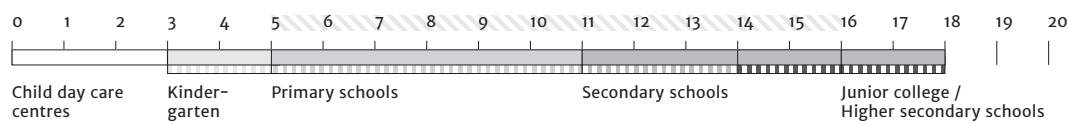
This paper explores the evolving nature of governance and governing within the Maltese educational system and focuses on the theme of collaboration that is considered as one of the pillars behind the reform and sanctioned by *The Education (Amendment) Act 2006*. Striking the balance between centralised and decentralised practices demands a new culture of co-operation and sharing of good practices, which have been identified as essential ingredients that must be addressed in a strategic manner and sustained over time. The study acknowledges the fact that we are still in the initial stages of the reform and that the reflections that are shared in this document are intended to provide an analytical perspective to the implications of collaboration for governance.

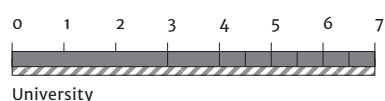*Figure 5: Structure of the national education system 2012/13*
Eurydice 2013, p.7

Malta

Historical context

The historical context is crucial to our understanding of governance and how it can unfold and affect policy making and implementation. We are still grappling with the concept of governance and governing and its application in real and practical terms. However, we can safely say that since the late 1980's there has been an effort to create the opportunity for all stakeholders to directly involve themselves in debates centred round educational reform.

The Malta Union of Teachers was one of the first institutions to make its voice heard on the importance of decentralisation in the memorandum it submitted to the Political Parties in December 1986. It demanded that each school should have a certain degree of autonomy because:

 "The present system imposes its rigidity on teachers and students alike, without taking into account either the particular conditions and problems of children in different localities and from different backgrounds, or the teacher's expertise, initiative and will to tackle the problems .... This decentralisation would make the Head of School, in consultation with teachers, the official responsible to determine what the best policies for his school are."
(MUT, 1986: v)

The discourse indicated an awareness of the problems posed by centralisation and a desire to decentralise the administration of education in Malta. Internationally, the 1970's and 1980's marked contradictory developments in the administration of educational systems. While countries like Britain (Salter and Tapper, 1981) and Australia (Barcan, 1979) were adopting policies, which limited the area of discretion to local entities, other countries like France and Sweden (Wallin, 1985), with centuries old central administrations, were legislating greater autonomy to schools. Locally, educational policy makers were beginning to consider that the quality of education could be improved by developing more discretion to the peripheries of the system.

A Devolution Policy

The Maltese Government chose to decentralise decision-making in the educational system through the legislative apparatus (i.e. the Education Act of 1988). It was argued that the role of legislation was not to direct and control systematic changes but rather to establish the conditions for change and innovation.

Since the late 1980's we have seen various attempts by the Maltese government to not only devolve greater responsibilities to the school but also actively engage society at large to give their input (Bezzina, 2005). In fact, issues of national interest, for example the development of the national minimum curriculum, and the national curriculum framework have been developed around the possibility of people, as ordinary citizens or through an organised group, to give their input in relation to the drafts proposed. Even at the draft stages we can note that the respective ministers for education have always made sure to engage people to serve through their different expertise. To be noted that the union of teachers has always actively engaged in educational and social discourse.

The latest education policy agenda, spearheaded by the Education (Amended) Act of 2006, sees the clustering of all Maltese primary and secondary schools into ten regional colleges (similar to federations in the UK). The Act not only sanctioned, but also mandated, inter-school collaboration and sustained the already existing partnerships between the schools, the parents and the wider community.

The seminal document, *For All Children to Succeed* (FACTS, Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005), presented a series of proposals and a number of challenges that were aimed to bring about fundamental changes in the way people synergize, relate and collaborate. The document provides for an overhaul of the Maltese education system that was meant to bring about a paradigm shift in local education and would also establish a strong orientation towards a collaborative mind-set that ought to consolidate an effective collegial spirit. This was aimed at counteracting the existing practice of teachers working in isolation. Local studies have shown that the top-down and highly bureaucratic system (Farrugia, 1992; Wain, 1991; Zammit Mangion, 1992) has led to teachers entrenching themselves in set ways and preferring to work on their own (Bezzina, 1991, 2009). It is within this context that the cultural change underlining the significance of teamwork and joint working has to take place. FACTS (MEYE, 2005) envisages that through networking and collaboration, schools can be

in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of Maltese students because they will work in partnership with one another, share resources, jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit, that is a college (Cutajar & Bezzina, 2013).

This process of change finds its significance in the formation of networks that were expected to give our education system the needed make over to make it compatible with the globalised world. This desired move presented us with two major challenges. If the school network reform, which addressed the themes and issues of autonomy, decentralisation and collaboration, was to bear fruition, the development of a new work ethic, in and beyond schools, was needed. The central administration had to move away from a command-and-control mind-set to a supportive and collaborative mentality while the schools and the teachers had to change their professional approach from one of isolation to that of collaboration and collegiality.

What is also worth noting given the scope of this project is the emphasis that has been given in discussion and policy documents for the need to start looking at leadership and governance at the school site from a different perspective. Especially looking at the relation to the role of head leaders in the system. It is interesting to note the importance that has been given to the head. The head is described as the lynchpin for the reforms to succeed.

Answers to the Questionnaire and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 10 and 11 June 2014

1. How is social dialogue organised in your country as far as education is concerned?

    Social dialogue is encouraged and takes place at different levels within our education system. Although we are still grappling with the concept of governance and governing and its application in real and practical terms we can safely say that since the late 1980's there has been an effort to create the opportunity for all stakeholders to directly involve themselves in debates centred round educational reform. In fact, issues of national interest, for example the development of the national minimum curriculum, and the national curriculum framework have been developed around the possibility of people, as citizens or else through an organised group, to give their input in relation to the drafts proposed. Even at the drafting stages we can take note that the respective ministers for education have always made sure to engage people to serve with their different expertise. The union of teachers have always actively engaged in the educational and social discourse.

    The Education (Amended) Act of 2006 saw the development of two directorates with the main aim of strengthening the services at the central level and also those who would directly serve the schools on a continual basis. The Mission of the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) is, "To ensure the effective and efficient operation of and delivery of services to the College and State schools within an established framework of decentralisation and autonomy. And, in constant collaboration with the colleges and schools, to plan, provide and allocate resources, human and otherwise, services, and learning tools, both of a pedagogical, psychosocial, managerial and operative nature and other ancillary support tools and to encourage and facilitate their networking and cooperation.
    In particular, among its functions and duties the DES, in conjunction with the colleges and schools, is to promote, encourage and monitor the democratic governance of schools through School Councils; to support colleges in the organisation of special initiatives and projects; in … the preparation of the business plan of the Directorate, consider and discuss the development plans of colleges and schools.

    On the other hand, the Mission of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education is, "To regulate, establish, monitor and assure standards and quality in the programmes and educational services in the

compulsory educational levels ..." In particular the DQSE aims to provide a professional service of support, guidance, monitoring, inspection, evaluation and reporting on the process of teaching in schools. The DQSE also supports the application of the curriculum, syllabi, pedagogy, assessment and examinations, and on the administration, and on the assurance and auditing of quality in colleges and schools.

Amongst its functions and duties the DQSE aims to: provide the required guidelines, amongst other things, for each school's development plan for the better implementation of the education policy and services ...; to ensure that all schools identify the educational training needs for the implementation of the curriculum ....; be responsible for compliance; evaluate and assess operation and results ...

Both the DES and the DQSE need to come together in order to provide direction and coherence. In this respect they are obliged by the Education Act to: Sustain an effective dialogue with whosoever is involved in the educational system and aim for widest consensus possible about any matter which may be relevant to education; ... cooperate with local and foreign institutions; ... keep informed and updated any person who is involved in the workings of the Directorates with Government policy, strategy and priorities; and give advice to the Minister.

At the micro level one finds that the education authorities have established the *Education Leadership Council (ELC).* This was established in 2008 with the introduction of the college system. It is chaired by the Director General for Educational Services (DG-DES), the Director General for Quality and Standards in Education (DG-DQSE), together with the occasional presence of the Director General for Support Services (DG-DSS).

The ELC is made up of all 10 directors within the Ministry for Education and Employment, and the 10 College Principals. The ELC is scheduled twice monthly, not excluding ad hoc meetings with one of the DGs.

The purpose of the ELC is to be a consultative body to the DGs and the Ministry. It is also a forum where innovations emerging from one of the directorates are discussed for action at school level. The Ministry and the Directorates also use the ELC as a launch pad to pass on information to schools through the College Principals. It also serves the purpose of an open communications channel between the schools and the directorates and the ministry through the College Principals. School issues and concerns are brought up to this level for national policies to be established and gradually implemented in schools.

At the micro level we have *The Council of Heads (COH).* This body is made up of the entirety of Heads of school within each respective college and chaired by the College's Principal. Meetings are held once every month excluding August. The CoH has been established according to the Education Act (2006) (Cap. 327 Part V Para 53 a-j). The aims of the Council are to nurture a spirit of collegiality among schools within the colleges, but not excluding inter-college collaboration; involving parents as active collaborators; among others. An all-encompassing aim is that of:

Ensuring that students entrusted to the schools within the colleges receive their educational entitlement according to their potential in a full, continuous and smooth process of education from an early age to the end of compulsory education in the perspective of lifelong learning and inspired by the highest human values. (ibid. a)

In practice, the purpose of the COH is to create a forum for sharing of good practices at all levels within schools. Another aim is putting forward queries or concerns and suggestions to be communicated and discussed at ELC level if not in the competence of the COH. It also assumes the role of a consultative body where concepts and/or practices are inseminated to be further developed into policies not only at college levels, but also at national level through the ELC.

At the school level we have *School Management Teams*. These are usually made of the Head of School together with the Assistant Heads, and in Secondary schools these include the Heads of Department. These teams are mainly responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. School Management Teams hold regular meetings with their staff to discuss issues that are central to school life. Together they develop the School Development Plan (SDP), which is meant to address both issues pertinent to the school itself but also embrace college, local and potentially national needs. It is the SDP that serves as a platform to undertake the internal reviews of the school. Teachers take an active part in the development of particular Action Plans that are identified for the SDP. In some cases these Action Plans also involve students, parents and members of the local community.

Naturally, the previous paragraphs note what is stated in the Education Act and the policies that are meant to determine our practices. However, there are various issues that militate against the implementation of such laudable goals. There is both research and anecdotal evidence that shows that "teaching personnel and school leaders are attuned to many of the reforms even if it means more commitment and more work" (Borg & Giordmaina, 2012: 148). But, two years since this study was undertaken we do feel that we are facing innovation overload with the risk that school personnel will not be able to react professionally to the demands being made. It is no wonder that the Minister for Education has stated that for the time being there will be no new initiatives introduced for an unknown time period for consolidation and review of the current initatives.

It is to be noted that moving from a context of isolation to one of collaboration and hence collaborative endeavour is proving more demanding than expected. Various studies (e.g. Cutajar, 2014) show the difficulties encountered in a number of State college as they try to embrace joint working and collaboration.

Being a small island state whilst having the benefits of proximity, and therefore communicating with all possible groups through face-to-face meetings fairly quickly, there is the problem we come across of "smallness". People can easily communicate with others that at times they even bypass the hierarchy. This can lead to frustration as people feel useless as their authority and role is undermined. It seems that the reorganisation that needs to occur also implies that people, meaning all stakeholders, need to appreciate the different roles being played in the endeavour to improve the educational system and that respect is shown as the restructuring takes place. If the reforms imply that decisions are taken where it matters – i.e. on location at the school site, then school leaders and their teachers need to be adequately supported so that society at large knows that issues can be resolved there. However, schools on their own do not have the expertise or the skills required, therefore adequate support needs to be provided. Naturally, we can say that there is never enough!

2. Does the government have an explicit quality agenda, comprising targets and programmes that are to enhance the overall quality of education?

The Maltese government has an explicit quality agenda for primary, secondary and post-secondary education, including further and higher education as enacted by the Education Act of 2006. Currently, the present government is drafting a specific Act related to higher education that is expected to be released for public consultation in the forthcoming months.
Given the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework in 2012[43] educational authorities are currently introducing a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education received by our students. The NCF sets out targets to increase the rate of participation of students in further and higher education.

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43   https://www.curriculum.gov.mt

The NCF also sets targets on the percentage of students who obtain at least 5 passes at SEC level and to reduce the percentage of Early School Leavers. The aim is also to increase the benchmark levels in International Studies including PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. Programmes are being developed to reach these targets. A national literacy strategy was launched in 2013. It intends to address literacy issues in Malta by providing students with the best opportunities to acquire the required literacy skills. Work has started on developing a national Learning Outcomes Framework for the main learning areas and cross-curricular themes identified in the NCF document. Learning and Assessment Programmes that will be developed for the subjects that are taught during compulsory schooling will complement this. This piece complements the work already done in formulating the consultation document entitled, '*Early childhood education & care in Malta: The way forward*'. The gradual introduction of the electronic tablets in primary schools, are also expected to enhance the overall quality of education in Malta. This technological innovation complements the introduction of the interactive whiteboards in all primary and secondary school classes together with the provision of science and technology equipment in all secondary schools in 2012.

3. Are there any contrasting views on the meaning and interpretation of educational quality in your country, among key actors like: central government/ employers of education and trade unions?

Judging from the way the educational agenda is developed and the direct involvement of the Teachers' Union, and the subsequent Collective Agreements that are signed, one can say that there is general agreement between government and trade unions. Naturally, as certain circumstances unfold new implications surface sometimes that are usually ironed-out through further discussions or negotiations. Whenever concern is raised within the ranks of educators the trade union immediately addresses matters, whatever nature they may be. Trade union officials do make it a point to ensure that their members respect the channels of communication and only address concerns from their end when all else fails. The Union also encourages particular research, even when funds are limited, to help relate and understand the changes, and more so, the implications behind the changes that the reforms bring on the profession.

Naturally, lecturers within the Faculty of Education also react to specific issues related to reforms. Although, in most cases, the Faculty is represented throughout the discussions there are times when individuals, or groups of individuals, within the faculty voice their opinion.

Furthermore, through social media people often react to the changes or developments whether proposed or enacted. The level of contention expressed here can be quite evident.

4. Have employers of education in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

The area of school leaders' effectiveness is being addressed in a number of ways. Within the DQSE, the Quality Assurance Department's (QAD) role is to support, regulate, establish, monitor and assure standards and quality in the programmes and educational services provided by Maltese State and Non-State schools. Its aim is to provide guidelines for better implementation of the school's development plan; it is helping schools build internal capacity so that they can undertake their own internal audits; they assess schools in three main areas, namely Educational Leadership and Management, Learning and Teaching, and School Ethos. Therefore it 'measures' what the head of school does in relation to a set of criteria and indicators. The results that come from the work carried out by the QAD help the members of the school in order to address areas for improvement and development.

It is also worth noting that the position as the head of school is the only official position that requires a post-graduate qualification. This was part of the negotiations between the State and the Malta Union of Teachers that led to the Collective Agreement of 1994. As a result, those who are interested in pursuing

a career in Headship require the postgraduate diploma in educational leadership or higher qualifications.

As seen from figure 6, the vast majority of current Heads of school are in possession of postgraduate qualifications.

The local expert has, over the years, highlighted the importance of establishing a national centre for educational leadership that would, among other things, ensure that educational leaders and school leaders in particular are provided with on going professional development opportunities, that we develop the national professional standards for school leaders, and provide a forum for debate and research. Currently the Ministry is considering this proposal.

The Malta Union of Teachers often corresponds with the Ministry and/or relative authorities regarding the difficulties faced by Heads of school. The Union has even commissioned and published a nationwide study carried out by autonomous researchers to delve into and highlight the various difficulties and needs of school administrators. The MUT has often criticised the abject bureaucracy, which is distracting Heads from focusing on the educational leadership role.

Figure 6: Heads of school by sector and qualifications

SECTOR	Postgraduate Diploma	Masters	No postgraduate qualifications	TOTAL
Primary	62	5	1	68
Secondary	22	4	3	29
Post–Secondary	2			2
Resource Centre[44]	2	3		5
TOTAL	88	12	4	104

5. Have trade unions in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

The Malta Union of Teachers, as representative of educators in all grades in educational institutions, are responsible for negotiations of Sectoral and/or Collective Agreements. The MUT negotiates the following agreements:

a. Collective agreements for all Civil Service Employees (together with another six unions). The agreement is concerned about general conditions of all government employees, like Health and Safety Issues, Industrial Disputes, Industrial Representation, health and Safety, Salary Scale structure and increments, and so on.

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44   Centres for special education provision

b. Sectoral Agreements for all educators working in State Schools and/or State Departments. This agreement supplements the civil Service Agreement and is concerned with the conditions of mechanisms specific to education grades, including working hours, allowances, teaching loads, holidays, special leave, etc. Currently the Union is working on a sectoral agreement for Student Services Grades that in the future would be amalgamated with the main agreement

c. Collective Agreements for educators working in church and independent schools, and at post-secondary, higher and tertiary levels.

The practise in Malta has the Union, whenever a CA is close to its expiration, write to the employer concerned asking for appropriate negotiations to start. Generally a series of meetings are then initiated in which various proposals from both sides are discussed and negotiated.

In some rare cases there is failure to reach an agreement. Unions then resort to industrial disputes and sometimes jump to action, as well as hold reconciliation meetings chaired by independent personnel. Rarely an issue is tackled at industrial or government tribunal levels. In our case, the MUT encourages a dialogue approach and before any actions are taken all dialogue possibilities are exhausted. Not all Unions, however, adopt the same approach.

The intent is therefore not for the MUT to formulate its own policies but to be directly involved in the development of national policies that are then spearheaded by educational authorities. However, the MUT recognises its dual role of serving both as a trade union, which negotiates salaries and conditions for its members and teaching grades in the country, but also the role of providing opportunities for the profession to grow.

In this respect, over the years the MUT has engaged in various initiatives in order to provide learning opportunities for its members including school leaders. These include an annual conference on specific topics (e.g. Effective and Modern School Management, 23rd November 2013); commissioning of educational reports (e.g. *Towards a Quality Education for All The College System: examining the system*, 2012) the publication of an education journal (*The Educator*), as well as occasional papers and educational publications.

6. School autonomy

	Resources	Curriculum
Netherlands	85%	91%
UK	76%	80%
Italy	27%	64%
Malta		

Data source: PISA 2012 (OECD, 2013, p.383) Represents percentage of decisions taken by the school in the domains of resources and curriculum

Malta is juxtaposed within a reform context where the curriculum is highly centralised but teachers maintain freedom of instruction (see the Eurydice 2008 Report entitled: *Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of Teachers in Europe* – http://www.eurydice.org).

The level of autonomy fits in the model described by EURYDICE as one where, "central (top-level) public authority sets out a general framework outlining the main features of curricular content which are then worked out in greater detail ... [by] ... teachers in schools" (2008: 70). At the same time, whereas teachers were used to teaching in relative isolation, the reforms that have been proliferating since the late 1990's call for practices that are constantly increasing the need for teamwork. Furthermore, our participation in international surveys has highlighted the need to become focused on what actually takes place within the classroom. Therefore, we may be moving into a period where we focus on what has been described as 'teacher fit,' where we study the relationship between the individual characteristics of teachers and the quality of learning taking place.

A major issue that is surfacing as we engage with the reform is there seems to be a range in agreement regarding the need to decentralise and give more autonomy to schools (as set out in the Education Act of 2006), yet we have not mapped out a plan of action that sees the shift of control from the centre to the college or school site. In my opinion, given that we are a small State, we need to establish a balance between centralised and decentralised practices. While in larger countries moving towards site-based management and school autonomy is deemed ideal, in our context – i.e. a Small Island State – I would not recommend going for full school-based autonomy. At the moment central authorities seem to be maintaining and establishing stronger control mechanisms. While this may sound paradoxical and goes against the spirit of the reform, we do believe that this is essential and part of the process of growth that we must go through. It is for this very reason that a road map with clear milestones needs to be established so that all stakeholders have a clear vision of where we are heading and how we hope to get there. It is imperative that the areas that central authorities, as the employer, deem to be their prerogative and remain under their control, need to be clearly articulated and those, which would be delegated, also highlighted. In this way, the different stakeholders know the type of decentralisation practices that would be enacted over the years and have clear governance structures.

7. Do the schools in your country have school boards?

The Education (Amended) Act of 2006 discusses the establishment of College Boards. So far they have not been established.

8. Please indicate with percentage the following priority areas in what is formally expected from primary and secondary school boards in your country: (high percentages indicate high priority).

Not applicable

9. Would you say that the degree to which school boards and school governors are expected to be responsible for school quality is increasing or decreasing?

Not applicable

10. How autonomous are teachers in your country in terms of the degree to which they have decision-making authority in the domains of: a) curriculum and instruction, and b) student policies?

The country is slowly shifting from a highly centralised system to a more decentralised one. Thus we are seeing that while many policies in relation to curriculum design and development; curriculum and subject content matter; standards and the quality assurance matters are highly centralised, the system allows for a large extent of teacher's professional autonomy. In spite of a highly centralised system, teachers enjoyed professional autonomy in relation to the pedagogies of teaching adopted in their classrooms. Teachers operated in their own way and monitoring of practices took place informally and sporadically.

The 2008 Eurydice report notes that teachers enjoy full autonomy in determining teaching methods (p.25); in determining the criteria for internal student assessment (p.31) although guidelines are provided by the directorates (p.32); school Heads enjoy autonomy in determining whether a student repeats a year or not (p.34); whereas teachers enjoy limited autonomy as to whether a student should repeat a year or not (p.33).

On the other hand there is no autonomy of school Heads or the decision makers or teachers in determining the content of the national curriculum (pp. 18-20); school leaders and teachers are not involved in the choice of school textbooks (p.27) [45]; teachers have no say into how children are organised into groups (p.29).

This issue of collective responsibility and accountability is a thing of recent years. Over the past few years, we have been trying to inculcate the culture of peer adult learning and the creation of professional development opportunities so that teachers share and discuss educational issues pertinent to their teaching and the learning environment. This concerted effort implies that the drive is to encourage educators to discuss and engage in sharing good practices; in challenging the way they do things. Hence, we are trying to nurture an environment of critical discourse amongst school educators as they take a more direct interest in what they teach and more importantly how they teach and the impact this is having on student learning. Moving away from an isolationist mentality to viewing teaching as a shared endeavour is critical. At the same time we appreciate that changing a) the mind-set, and b) the practice will take time bring about.

At the same time we are cautious of the issues raised in the Eurydice report cited above that notes, "newly acquired collective responsibility actually reduces the capacity of individual teachers to take their own decisions. ... Teachers are obliged to co-operate" (2008: 12). Given the pressures emanating from national and international test results the move towards discussing teaching and learning practices together with a development of a competence-based curriculum can be argued as leading to a situation where teachers have no discretion or autonomy at all.

On the other hand, colleges and the respective schools have always been responsible for developing policies related to the better management of schools. Over the years, the schools through their different forms of governance have introduced policies related to codes of conduct and behaviour; uniform policies; homework policies, etc.

11. Does your country have a national programme to enhance teacher professionalisation? If yes, describe and (if applicable) refer to the involvement of employers of education and trade unions.

Since 1988 teachers and school leaders were provided with the possibility of pursuing short INSET courses. These courses were organised either in July or September. Initially courses were 12 to 20 hours long and were pursued on a voluntary basis. After the Collective Agreement of 1994, teachers were obliged to pursue at least one course per year with the possibility of pursuing another programme on a voluntary basis. Duration of these courses is usually 12 hours.

Apart from these INSET courses, educators at school levels have between 52 and 80 hours for professional learning on an annual basis. This includes structured sessions for teachers in their respective year groups; in Primary school curriculum meetings run 90 minutes, and Departmental meetings in Secondary schools run

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45 It is to be noted that in Malta textbooks are provided free of charge and books bought and distributed by central authorities. At the same time teachers do choose supplementary texts

45 minute sessions. There are also formal meetings during the term to discuss either college and or school issues that are reflected in the School Development Plan. Furthermore, during the school year other CPD sessions may be organised by the respective Directorates. Educators at all levels may also avail themselves of European Commission initiatives, such as Erasmus exchange programmes and Grundtvig programmes.

Educators in Malta are also provided a one-time monetary allowances for teachers who participate in three annual CPD sessions, held after school hours and for academic qualifications held beyond what is required for a given post (refer to *Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe*, EURYDICE, 2013)[46]. Teachers and educators at all levels can avail themselves of financial support to further their studies at post-graduate level [47].

12. How is school performance monitored in your country:

   a. By means of quantitative outcome indicators, based on examinations and/or achievement tests
   b. By means of school inspection
   c. By means of a combination of quantitative outcome indicators and inspections
   d. In another way (please describe)

The country over the decades has relied heavily on assessing the quality of education on the examination results that students achieved at 16+ and 18+. Examinations as students were prepared to sit for high stakes national and international examinations so that students would gain entry qualifications into postsecondary institutions so as to further their studies or gain qualifications recognised by employers.

However, over the years, thanks to the process of decentralisation schools have been encouraged to take a more proactive approach to monitor progress and address their own local needs through the development of School Development Plans. These plans would tackle school improvement issues that were identified by school personnel.

With the introduction of the QAD we now have a two-pronged approach as schools undertake internal reviews and the QAD will undertake its own external review. These provide all stakeholders with various data that would help schools plot future Action Plans. Naturally, while not all plans are directly related to student performance and/or achievement, they all have an indirect impact on school effectiveness.

13. What are the ultimate consequences of below standards school performance

   a. Closure of the school
   b. Financial sanctions
   c. Public announcement of sub-standard performance
   d. An intensified monitoring regime
   e. Temporary extra external support to improve future performance
   f. Other, please describe

One of the main roles of the QAD is to undertake External Reviews.[48] If after a review, the report identifies areas that warrant specific attention, members of QAD can undertake periodic checks or observations to see

46 http://www.eurydice.org
47 Refer to the EACEA/Eurydice 2013 Report *Funding of Education in Europe* – http://www.eurydice.org
48 https://www.education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance

whether recommendations made are being implemented. QAD members can support the implementation of particular recommendations made, or provide advice as to how such recommendations could be implemented. If matters are not resolved then another external review may be undertaken within the year. If still found wanting another external review is undertaken within yet another year.

14. Which priority ordering (1-3) would apply to your country as far as emphasis on school accountability is concerned

    a. oriented to inform higher administrative levels (1)
    b. oriented to support parents' choice of schools (3)
    c. oriented to internal and professional feedback (2)

The current system sees that the QAD has the responsibility of supporting, monitoring and ensuring that national colleges as well as school aims and targets are achieved. Their brief, as noted in the document *The External Review: The Integrated School Improvement Framework* (2014), allows education officials to relate to the recommendations made and offer support if and when needed. Furthermore, officials from the Curriculum arm (e.g. education officers) provide their expertise to schools on an on going basis.

The external review is primarily "an instrument that supports and empowers schools in their on going quest to improve their practice and their outcomes" (p.5). The external review is also an instrument for accountability and conformity with national standards and aspirations. As noted in the QAD document "a successful and useful external review is situated precisely in the delicate and dynamic balance between these complementary functions of support and accountability" (p.5). The document clearly explains the external review parameters, articulating step-by-step what happens before, during and after the review has been undertaken.

At the same time, the feedback also helps schools to review the school's Development Plan, particularly their action plans.

15. Is the accountability system in the field of education generally accepted or contested, in your country?

The recently published consultation document, *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta, 2014-2024,* shows the country's commitment to provide present and future generations with the necessary skills and talents for employability and citizenship in the 21st century. The document presents four main goals: (i) to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, and increase student achievement; (ii) support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers; (iii) increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning, and (iv) raising the levels of student grasp and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training. This document lists a number of targets, which will improve the quality of education provision.

The drive to address accountability is to be understood within the framework of the reforms that are under way. Namely, the drive is to devolve greater responsibilities to the schools through a system of networking. The implication is that schools need to be responsible for the quality of education being provided and thus leading towards a context of professional autonomy. This will see schools taking a more proactive role. Currently we are seeing initiatives being taken to the central level with schools often having to be reactionary in nature rather than proactive. At the same time, schools are expressing evidence of shared responsibility and collective autonomy through the various initiatives undertaken at college or school levels. This can be witnessed through School Development Plans that schools develop. These documents

are the lifeline of each school and are meant to reflect not only national or regional needs but also local and community ones as well.

To support schools in their endeavours, the education authorities help schools in two main ways. Through the Curriculum Department, education officials visit schools and mainly teachers to help them address issues pertinent to subject matter, teaching and learning strategies and other day-to-day concerns. Naturally, these same officials run regular INSET training sessions that teachers and school leaders can attend on a compulsory and/or voluntary basis. The IT branch provides on going support as well as the drive to integrate the use of technology into the learning process. On the other hand, the QAD provides help on two levels; on one hand it is providing schools with the human and technical support for school members to build their internal capacity to monitor and evaluate their practices, hence building the capability of undertaking self-evaluation and review. In this way, schools are learning to tell their own story, to coin a term used by John McBeath. At the same time, through a system of external review, education officials can monitor the development of the school from a number of domains, namely Educational Leadership and Management, Learning and Teaching, and School Ethos. With this information schools are provided with external feedback, which also allows them to embrace opinions and views as to how to bring about improvement.

Given the current drive to improve the quality of education provision by the education authorities, the country has made the decision to take part in international studies (e.g. PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA). This places the issue and discussion on quality and standards in another playing field. In fact, the publication of the results was followed by a Malta report for each of these International Surveys.
(e.g.PISA[49] TIMSS[50] PIRLS[51])
This has led to national debates on how successful we have been in the implementation of particular reforms. As a result, the government has undertaken a number of initiatives that would lead toward improvements on our international placement. A national Literacy Strategy with special emphasis on Maltese and English was launched in 2013. A report regarding the Vision for Science Education in Malta was published in 2011, together with a number of measures taken at classroom levels, aimed to enhance the teaching and learning of science amongst students. Teachers are encouraged to enhance higher order skills in students through pedagogy of Inquiry Based Learning and Problem Solving.

We feel that such debates are healthy. Although the argument may be put forward that whatever we do, teachers end up 'teaching to the test' (so as to ensure improved results, at least in the short term) and may question the level of teacher professional autonomy. Our concern lies more on innovation overload, on the lack of monitoring and evaluation procedures that are needed within and externally to the school, and to ensure that centralised policies do materialise.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that candidates pursuing postgraduate studies constantly undertake research in various areas of education and seminars and conferences are regularly organised which has helped create the appropriate culture of debate that is needed.

49   http://researchanddevelopment.gov.mt/en/Documents/PISA%202009+%20Malta%20Report.pdf
50   https://researchanddevelopment.gov.mt/en/Documents/TIMSS 2011 Malta Report.pdf
51   https://researchanddevelopment.gov.mt/en/Documents/PIRLS 2011- Malta Report.pdf

16. On the basis of research studies, how would you estimate the amount of working time the average school leader in your country spends on the following activities (please indicate by means of percentages, summing to 100%):

a.	Representative duties	15%
b.	Administrative tasks	50%
c.	Coordinating and monitoring teaching and learning	10%
d.	Active interaction with external stakeholders	10%
e.	Human resource management and human resources development of staff	15%
f.	Other duties:	0%

While there are no official statistics that we can fall on, the above percentages reflects our estimation of the time spent on these various aspects of work. However, we do have research studies that have shown that the colleges reform system, in particular, has impacted the time that our school leaders spend in different facets of work. For example, the study of Grech and Mifsud (2008) noted that Heads of school experienced a more personal and improved relationship with their Colleges Principal but noted that their workload had increased. A more recent study has shown that "the culture of collaborative practice seems to be making headway..." (Cutajar and Bezzina, 2013: 23). At the same time the study acknowledges that we need to work harder in order to ensure that the culture that promotes a team approach needs to start involving more teachers. The new culture of collaboration among teachers is limited given that not much time is organised for on going engagements between school leaders and the teaching grades.

We need to undertake a study that would help us to understand how our Heads of school actually spend their time. Undertaking a participant observation study would provide us with interesting data to work on. An older Maltese study using such an approach (Bezzina, 1995) highlighted the points raised by Henry Mintzberg who had argued back in the 1970's that: "... managers work at an unrelenting pace, that their activities are characterised by brevity, variety and discontinuity ... (and) they seem to jump from issue to issue, continually responding to the needs of the moment" (1975: 50-51). While the studies undertaken by Mintzberg were done in industry, the findings resonate with those in education. Work done by a group of Heads that were observed over a period of ten school days was each characterised by variety, brevity and fragmentation.

Work in schools is rarely rational and is often chaotic, disrupted and to the undiscerning- confusing. To a large extent their activities were frequently made up of short durations. Most of these activities tended to arise spontaneously out of the milieu of the daily life of the school. A substantial amount of the Heads work appeared to involve 'putting out fires' as they responded to situations arising throughout the school day. The trend was for them to move from one encounter to another, both by their own choice – following their own agenda and because of the pressure of work. In handling rapidly occurring events they tended to function as 'instant executives'. Decisions were made, information communicated and leadership represented. Though some work had been pre-scheduled, due to interruptions, such tasks took longer than anticipated to execute. It is to be noted that the Heads made themselves accessible to everyone and everything as time allowed, adopting an open-door policy.

Other studies have shown that when schools dedicate structured time they leave an impact on the culture, climate and work practices of the school. A number of studies have highlighted the importance of allowing learning communities to evolve in their own unique ways, calling therefore for flexibility to be a key feature in the system (Attard, 2007; Balzan, 2009; Pisani, 2009).

17. Would you please give a rank-ordering of school leadership orientations as they represent emphasis given in your country to certain orientations:

   a. Instructional leadership (primarily oriented toward optimizing the teaching and learning programme) 4
   b. Transactional leadership (primarily oriented to school improvement and organisation development) 2
   c. Integral leadership, in the sense of a combination of instructional and transactional leadership 3
   d. Integral leadership in the sense of a broad spectrum of orientations (internal productivity, responsiveness to external stakeholders, human relations orientation, and creating functional cultural and structural conditions) 1

Given the reform the move has been towards greater devolution of authority to the college and/or school site through the principles of networking and networked learning. Various studies have shown that the move is recognised as an important and desired by all stakeholders (e.g. Borg and Giordmaina, 2012). Encouraging and facilitating a collaborative culture and sustaining a mentality of shared leadership and collective accountability will take time. The Education Act calls for a new form of governance – one that allows schools through a system of networks – that sees new forms of school organisation develop. In the wake of such government policies much will be expected to increase the validity, role and power of collaboration in future collective agreements between the state and the teachers' union, and between the colleges and the wider community.

This will be one of the major challenges that the State, as the employer, and the Teachers' Union face as they engage in negotiations that sees a clear focus on improving the learning opportunities for all educators in our schools. Research and anecdotal evidence shows that for improvements to take place educators need to dedicate more structured time to work together taking them beyond existing work patterns.

18. On the basis of your own experience or research studies, how would you rate the frequency of application of distributed leadership in primary and secondary schools in you country:

There is a combination of both formal delegation to deputy leaders or department Heads and informal 'teacher leadership'. A lot depends on the way school Heads view leadership. While we have examples of distributed forms of leadership being encouraged as Heads of school delegate different responsibilities to their Senior Management Teams, there are also other Heads that want to maintain control of the way tings unfold. In the latter scenario, the amount and time dedicated to meetings do not lead to resolutions. In fact, the evidence shows that when this happens it leads to more frustration as people are let down. On the other hand, there are very good examples of people using School Development Planning as an opportunity for people to get together to embrace the challenges and to create the opportunities to take their schools and/or colleges forward.

Thus, we have exemplary SDPs that show the involvement of the various stakeholders. The SDPs help us appreciate the type of work that schools are engaged in, often taking them beyond responding to prescribed or national needs and creating opportunities that help all members engage in learning initiatives. Examples include, the participation in local and international events (e.g. art competitions, Green flag/ Blue flag international award schemes); the participation in Grundtvig or Erasmus programmes, like peer learning visits or student exchanges; and voluntary work.

On a national level, the education authorities and the colleges themselves, organise talks and seminars on various aspects of school leadership and management. The Malta Society for Educational Administration and Management (MSEAM), independently and in conjunction with the education authorities, also organise regular talks involving local and international speakers to disseminate good practices regarding these areas.

Such examples help us to appreciate the benefits of shared and distributed leadership. Naturally, at the end of the day, what matters are the personal conviction, the drive and commitment of our school leaders. For this reason, it is important to keep providing the opportunities to grow, to challenge what is, to share and showcase good practices. In this way, we hope that more and more educators will realise the importance behind shared governance.

19. Please indicate the priority given to certain strategies to enhance educational quality by different actors and stakeholders (by rank-ordering from 1 to 5, each of the alternative strategies, from the perspective of each stakeholder):

	Central government	Local school boards	School leaders	Trade unions	Employers, other than central government	Teachers
Personnel policies, teacher empowerment	3	Na	1	1	Na	2
Curriculum alignment and opportunity to learn	1	Na	2	3	Na	4
Formative assessment	2	Na	4	2	Na	3
Implementation of effective teaching strategies	5	Na	3	5	Na	1
Pronounced leadership orientations	4	Na	5	4	Na	5

This rating is global and subjective. The following arguments were used to present this rating:
· The main agent of change is Central government and the reforms are spearheaded by initiatives undertaken at central level in consultation with the ELC.
· The Teachers' Union is the body that negotiates with the state over sectoral agreements that have a direct impact on teachers' conditions of work.
· Teachers have relative freedom as to how they teach.
· While the pressures on Headship have increased, their level of impact on school governance is still relatively weak.

20. What are the proven governance and leadership successes and good practices in your country, as it comes to identifying critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness at different levels of responsibility: school governors, principals and teachers? And, what are the problematic areas?

The central theme of this project is "the role of employers and teacher unions in stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising the educational quality, by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations." The key focus is placed on the role of the two main stakeholders – the employer and the teachers' union, together with the focus on improving the effectiveness of school leaders as they impact on the quality of educational provision.

There are a number of issues that have been presented which highlight, on one hand the strengths of the current system and on the other weaknesses in the way the three concepts of autonomy, accountability, and leadership are enacted, and as illustrated in the answers provided in this questionnaire.

The main strengths are:
1. There is a concerted move by the education authorities to devolve greater responsibilities to the school site through a system of college networks.
2. The move from a highly centralised system to a more decentralised one as a result of the above.
3. The strengthening of the education authorities in order to provide the policies on which the reforms can be undertaken and provide adequate support structures to take the schools forward.
4. The modernisation of a system that strengthens the link between the central authorities and the schools authority.
5. The introduction of a more research-based approach and the introduction of a research department within the directorates.
6. The involvement of Malta in a number of international studies.
7. A greater focus on data collection and understanding of data.
8. The sharing of good practices that have become more evident within and across schools.
9. Stronger input on the continuing professional development of teachers.
10. The development of the Integrated School Improvement Framework, which aims to align internal review with external review and performance appraisals.

At the same time the challenges are:
1. The growing responsibilities regarding school leaders accountability.
2. To provide on going support to help school leaders address and manage change.
3. The need to work more closely with schools to understand both local and international data from the participation in studies so that these can have an impact on teaching.
4. The need for more structured time for teachers to work together. Allowing school leaders to create the structures for distributed forms of leadership and more importantly, instructional leadership.
5. The need for different social partners to get closer together and conduct more collaborative initiatives.
6. The engagement of parents and the wider community within schools.

Participating in this project has allowed us to reflect on the reform processes that we have experienced over the past 25 years. It has helped a number of us involved in different ways throughout this journey to appreciate what we have gone through and what we are currently going through. Reform is a slow process that takes years to implement. Ministries who can sometimes lose sight of the long-term implications behind their reforms spearhead reform agendas. Too many changes at the same time can be unhealthy and it is necessary that changes be brought about by research that has been tried within the local context. We have also learned to appreciate the involvement of the major stakeholders as essential for reforms to take place. There is also the acknowledgement that reforms will not take place overnight, given that it calls for people to change their mind-set. Moving away from an isolationist mentality to one that sees people working with and through others is proving a daunting task. The issue of power and control is still a contentious one. People find it hard to let go. At the same time, we want to give schools more say in the way things evolve at the school site. We are creating a discourse that challenges the current philosophy of teachers working independently of each other. The need to work alongside teachers and see school leaders placing transformational and instructional leadership at the top of their agenda is still one of our targets. This project has helped us to highlight the need for the stakeholders to appreciate this more and work on it.

Our school leaders are good at handling the day-to-day issues. In order to ensure that school improvement takes place, school leaders must administer, manage and work more closely with their staff, at different levels. This means working in structured and flexible manners with members of the staff. While at the same time

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learning how to handle and manipulate school based national and/or international data that is presented. Working together has also allowed us to appreciate the concept of care and love that needs to be shown to the children entrusted to our care. We may lose sight of this given the events that often dominate school life.

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Chapter 5: Case study UK - England

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This case study is based on the answers to the Questionnaire, discussed by the national task force, and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 17 and 18 September 2014.

Preamble: the English education system

Country Context

With a population of over 64 million, the United Kingdom (UK) is the third largest country in the EU by population after Germany and France and the third largest economy by GDP. The UK constitutes four separate jurisdictions — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (but not England) each have their own national legislatures and each of the four jurisdictions has control of specific functions, notably health and education policy.

The economy of the UK is highly dependent on private services, especially financial services and retail, while its manufacturing industry has been in decline as a proportion of total economic output since the 1970s. Despite this decline, the UK has been successful in maintaining a highly competitive advanced manufacturing sector with strengths in aerospace, pharmaceuticals and automobiles. The UK economy was badly affected by the economic recession in 2008-2009, especially in financial services, and recovery has been slower than any of the previous recessions on record. However, the UK economy is now out-performing the rest of Europe in terms of growth as the economy recovers. Despite positive economic growth in 2013 and 2014, the UK's public sector net debt is still high and will peak at 78.7% of GDP in 2015-2016 according to the Office for Budgetary Responsibility. The Government's programme of austerity, which has included two years of pay freezes for public sector workers followed by three years of a 1% cap on pay awards, will therefore continue through to the end of the current parliament.[52]

The main focus of this national case study report will be on England, since the Peer Learning Visit, which is the basis of this report, took place in Hillingdon, London, UK.

The English schools system in numbers[53]

- There are 8.3 million pupils enrolled in schools in England - 580,000 of them in private (fee-paying schools)
- There are 24,000 schools — 2,400 are private schools
- There are 16,800 state-funded primary schools, 3,300 state-funded secondary schools
- There are 152 local authorities with education responsibilities
- An average-sized primary school has 200 pupils, the secondary average is 950 pupils[54]
- England is undergoing a baby boom — the Department for Education estimates that 420,000 additional

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52   UCEA, EFEE, ETUCE report, 2014

53   Taken from the annual census of schools, pupils and their characteristics for January 2014: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014

54   http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN02625/schools-and-class-sizes-social-indicators-page

school places are needed between 2010 – 2015[55]

The different types of state-funded schools in England

There is a wide diversity in the types of school and diversifying the choice of school providers for parents has been an explicit aim of Government policy in recent years.

There are **9,300 community schools**, which are maintained by the local authority, which is the employer of staff, sets admissions policies for these schools and owns the land and buildings. Most primary schools are community schools, but the majority of secondary schools no longer are.

There are **6,100 'faith' schools** (voluntary aided schools) and the majority are Church of England or Catholic schools, with small numbers of Jewish, Muslim and schools of other faiths. These are also 'maintained' by the local authority, but their governing body employs staff and sets admissions policies and the diocese to which they belong usually owns the land and buildings. The diocese also has the right to appoint the majority of 'foundation' governors.

There are **960 foundation schools,** which were community schools that were given additional freedoms by a previous Government and were called 'Grant Maintained Schools'. A subsequent government returned them to being maintained by the local authority, but the ownership of land and buildings remains with the trust established at the time and the governing body employs staff and sets admissions criteria.

All the school types above are 'maintained' by the local authority and councils have a role in supporting their improvement and powers to intervene if they are underperforming, by issuing warning notices or withdrawing delegated budgets. However, their powers to intervene quickly and decisively are significantly curtailed by central government and in practice councils will usually only use their formal intervention powers when schools have received an 'inadequate' judgement by the schools inspectorate Ofsted.

The newest types of schools are **3,500 academies and free schools (4,000 as of September 2014),** which are directly accountable to, and funded by, central Government. The academies programme was established by the previous Government to turn around schools, often in deprived inner-city areas, with a long-term history of underperformance by bringing in outside sponsors, which included individuals and educational charities. The policy was established in 2000 and by 2010 there were more than 200 academies.

When a new Coalition Government came to power in 2010, legislation was passed to allow high performing schools (rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted) to convert to academy status without a sponsor and the eligibility was subsequently widened to include 'good' schools and even schools in Ofsted categories of concern if they were partnered with a highly-performing school. These are termed **'converter academies'** and around 3,000 schools have chosen to become academies through this route.

The programme of **sponsored academies** has also been accelerated with statutory Government guidance to local authorities that "academy status with the support of a strong sponsor is the best way of securing lasting improvement", in underperforming schools[56]. An expectation that schools found to be 'inadequate' by Ofsted should become sponsored academies has seen their numbers increase to around 1,000 schools. The Government has taken powers to forcibly convert 'inadequate' schools into academies and this policy of 'forced academisation' has led to high-profile campaigns against such conversion in some areas.

Free schools have the same legal status as academies and are new schools commissioned and funded directly by the Department for Education (whereas other types of academies are usually existing schools). Free school proposers can include groups of parents or teachers, existing schools or academies, charities, businesses, universities, trusts or religious or voluntary groups. They can be run by a private sector "education provider", but cannot be run for profit. The free schools programme was initiated in 2010 and there are currently 250,

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55   http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/The+council+role+in+school+place+planning/998e5667-6218-4a94-aa57-2633010edc51
56   Schools causing concern guidance, DfE May 2014 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2

with a further 110 planned[57].

Academies and free schools are directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through contracts known as 'funding agreements'. Ownership of land and buildings is transferred to an academy trust, which is a charitable company. The governing body employs staff and sets admissions policies. Local authorities have no powers to intervene in underperforming academies. This power rests with the Secretary of State, who can end funding agreements, require a change sponsor and force converter academies to become sponsored academies.

School funding

All revenue funding for education is through a ring-fenced grant from the central Government called the Dedicated Schools Grant. The total revenue budget for nurseries and schools up to 16 years old in 2014-2015 is £38.7bn (€49bn)[58]. £28.5bn of this is channelled through councils and paid into a ring-fenced fund, with the overwhelming majority of the money delegated directly to schools in line with locally agreed formulas. The remainder is paid directly to academies by the central Government, but based on the locally agreed formula for the council area in which the academy is based.

The majority of schools capital comes from central Government. £5bn has been allocated between 2010 and 2015 to provide new school places, with a further £2bn allocated to 2017. Most of this has been allocated to councils according to forecast future demand. Free schools capital is centrally allocated by the Department for Education, with £1.7bn budgeted to 2014/15.

Maintenance capital for maintained schools is allocated to local authorities according to a centrally set formula, with a separate allocation for faith schools. This amounted to £553m for community schools and £145m for faith schools in 2014-2015. Academies bid to a separated fund administered by central Government, with a £440m budget in 2014-2015. All schools get a small capital allocation, which they can prioritise for small local projects, which amounted to a total of £200m in 2014-2015.

There is a separate central Government capital programme for rebuilding schools that it is no longer economic to repair. Funds are allocated through a bidding process and the first phase of the 'Priority School Building Programme' has allocated £2.4bn to rebuild 261 schools.

The uniquely important role of school governing bodies

Governing Bodies play a central role in school governance in English schools. As subsequent Governments have sought to give greater autonomy to schools, power has increasingly been invested in school governing bodies. As the section on the different types of school shows, increasing numbers of schools are taking responsibility for becoming employers of staff and for setting admissions policies and these powers are invested in governing bodies. However, even in community schools the local authority is only an employer in a formal, contractual, sense and the governing body undertakes the majority of employer functions, including the appointment of the head teacher (but with advice from the local authority).

There are about 300,000 governors in England and they are unpaid volunteers. Although the current Government is putting an increasing emphasis on governors having the skills they need to carry out the important duties that they discharge, the current model of school governance is based on a stakeholder model, with government regulations requiring representation from parents, staff, the local authority and the local community.

However, the Government has amended the regulations that apply to maintained schools to reduce the focus on the representation of stakeholders and all governing bodies of maintained schools will be required to reconstitute under the new regulations by September 2015[59]. Under the new regulations the governing body

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57 For further information see the New Schools Network: http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/

58 Dedicated schools grant 2014 to 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-2014-to-2015

59 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools

must not be smaller than seven members and must include:

- at least two parent governors;
- the head teacher;
- one, and only one, staff governor;
- one, and only one, local authority governor; and
- The governing body may appoint as many additional co-opted governors as they consider necessary.

Governing bodies vary in size between 10 – 20+ members, but the Government is encouraging them to downsize. Governing bodies are the employer and admissions authority in academies and in faith and foundation schools. However, even in community schools, the governing body exercises the majority of employer functions. Their core functions of governors, again according to central Government regulation, are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

The Government is encouraging new models of governance to develop. The regulations above only apply to maintained (local authority) schools. Academies have much more freedom over their governance arrangements, and the Trustees of the academy foundation appoint the governing body. Academies have been encouraged to form chains and around half of all academies are part of a chain - on 1 August 2014, there were 2,222 academies in 486 chains. There are two main models:

- The multi-academy trust model – a group of schools which work together normally under a single trust. This model has been in use for some time in sponsored academy chains. These are charitable companies limited by guarantee set up to manage more than one academy.
- Umbrella trust model – an overarching umbrella trust, which has oversight of what is happening in each school and will be able to influence how the schools in the chain are run. Each school has its own academy Trust.

After a period of very rapid expansion, the rate of conversion to academy status has slowed down. More than a dozen academy chains have been barred by the Department for Education from running more schools amid serious concerns over education standards and financial mismanagement[60]. New research published by the House of Commons Education Committee highlights the potential for conflicts of interest to arise in the relationship between academies and sponsors[61].

The research identifies four broad areas where real or perceived conflicts of interest may occur for Academy Trusts under current arrangements:

- Connected, or related, party transactions. For example, where an individual on the board of a Trust benefits personally or via their companies.
- The provision of paid for services. For example, where the sponsor supplies a school improvement curriculum or back office service to a trust under a license that prevents the Trust from changing supplier (a form of tie-in currently permitted for provision of such services only 'at cost' and not for profit.)
- Less tangible conflicts that do not (directly) involve money: For example, inappropriate control exerted in some schools in Birmingham and an FE deciding (in its own interest) to close the 6th form at a local school where it is the sponsor.
- Conflicts that arise in the wider system: For example where a contracted Department for Education (DfE) Academy Broker also works for an academy Trust that they invite to pitch for a new school.

60 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10709227/DfE-bars-14-academy-chains-from-taking-on-more-schools.html
61 http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/
    education-committee/news/academy-research-report-published/

The role of local authorities in education

Councils are required by statute to maintain high educational standards in their areas. They have statutory duties to promote high standards in schools so that children and young people fulfil their potential.

Councils are responsible for a wider range of children's services than education and have a legal responsibility to promote the wellbeing of all local children. Elected councillors, as representatives of their local communities will always have a keen interest in high school standards to improve the educational outcomes and life chances of local children.

Councils have particular responsibility for standards in maintained schools (about 80% of schools or two thirds of pupils) and have powers to intervene in cases of underperformance. However, these intervention powers are heavily circumscribed by central Government and councils will normally only use them in the event of an 'inadequate' judgement of a school by the schools inspectorate Ofsted.

Increasing numbers of academies (now more than half of secondary schools) and budget cuts have seen the council role diminish, with schools taking more of the lead in driving their own improvement and supporting struggling schools. A variety of models of school-to-school improvement are developing and a number of case studies feature in the LGA report about *the council role in school improvement*[62].

Councils have a unique responsibility to ensure there are enough school places for local children and young people. The Department for Education has estimated that 417,000 additional places will be required between 2010 and 2015. Most of the new places have been achieved by expanding existing schools because this is the most cost-effective option. However, if a new school is required it has to be an academy or free school – the 'academies presumption'. Councils have no powers to direct academies to expand so will have to negotiate and work in partnership to deliver the new secondary places needed in the future. A number of case studies feature in the LGA report about *the council role in school place planning*[63].

Councils also have an important role in making sure that admissions at local schools are fairly administered. They coordinate all schools admissions in their areas and all parents apply to schools through the council. They are the admissions authority for community schools and decide the criteria for prioritising admissions where there are more applications for a school than places. Faith schools and academies are 'own admission authorities'.

Central Government guidance suggests that councils that champion educational excellence:

1. Know their (maintained) schools and their performance
2. Intervene quickly and early in cases of underperformance
3. Encourage good and outstanding schools to help others
4. Identify strong academy sponsors for struggling schools
5. Work constructively with academies

The school inspectorate, Ofsted

Ofsted has a very powerful role in the English education system. It inspects all schools, all nursery settings and all colleges of further education. It inspects council children's services and it has recently introduced a new inspection framework for council support for school improvement where it has concerns that local standards are low compared to other areas.

Schools are inspected about every 3-4 years but more often if they are underperforming. There are 4 'grades': Outstanding (around 20% of schools), Good (60%), Requires Improvement (17%) and Inadequate (3%). Outstanding schools that continue to perform excellently are not re-inspected. Good schools can expect to be re-inspected within 3-5 years. Schools graded require improvement or inadequate can expect to be re-

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62 http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=16b1eed6-afe6-4b60-a65f-c65073f258d4&groupId=10180
63 http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/The+council+role+in+school+place+planning/998e5667-6218-4a94-aa57-2633010edc51

inspected within 18 months to 2 years, and will be expected to improve at least a grade. However, concerns that good schools can decline quickly between inspections has led Ofsted to change the inspection regime and from September 2015 'good' schools will have a short inspection every 3 years to check that they are maintaining standards.

Ofsted has been criticised for having too much influence in the school system, leading to schools focusing on Ofsted inspections excessively and seeking to promote an 'Ofsted approved' style of teaching. A recent report *Watching the Watchmen*[64] by right-leaning think-tank Policy Exchange called for radical reform of Ofsted, including the total abolition of all routine lesson observations by Ofsted in the course of their standard inspections. Other recommendations, such as taking back outsourced inspectors back in-house to ensure greater consistency of training; Ofsted is already implementing outcomes and quality control.

The role of central government

The Government has a central role in the education system. It overall aims, set out on the Department for Education's website is as follows:

"The Department for Education is responsible for education and children's services in England. We work to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for children and young people"

A key Government policy is to create a school-led, self-improving education system and increasingly schools are expected to take responsibility for their own improvement and to help struggling schools. A national infrastructure to support this has been established, including more than 500 Teaching Schools, National Leaders of Education and National Leaders of Governance[65].

Increasing school autonomy is a long-term trend in central Government policy since legislation to put into effect 'Local Management of Schools' in 1988 transferred financial control of schools from councils to head teachers and governors. Under the current Government 'freedom from local authority control' has been taken to a new level, with more than 4,000 schools directly funded by, and accountable to the Secretary of State for Education. Academies, which now educate more than one third of pupils in England, are free from national terms and conditions for teachers; national restrictions on the length of the school day and the timing of holidays; and can hire unqualified teachers.

However, many have argued that increasing autonomy has been accompanied by greater central Government control. A national curriculum, set by the Department for Education was also introduced in 1988 and recently, concerns have been expressed about reforms to the national curriculum, with the Schools Minister in the Coalition calling for an independent body to set the curriculum to "put subject experts in the driving seat rather than politicians".[66] The funding of schools has also been increasingly centralised with virtually all school funding financed by Government grants since 2006 and local discretion to vary funding reduced.

With greater autonomy has also come greater accountability. The Government sets 'floor standards' which trigger intervention, measured through Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at age 11 or 12 and national exams at age 16 or 17. Children are also given a 'phonic screening test' at age 5 or 6 and sit teacher-assessed SATs at age 7 or 8. Assessments results are published on the DfE website in 'league tables' and are extensively covered in national and local media, creating a very high stakes accountability system.

The standard benchmark for secondary schools has been the percentage of pupils achieving grades A-C in 5 subjects in the national exam at 16 (GCSE), including English and Mathematics. Concerns that this encourages a focus on a narrower range of subjects and on the C/D grade boundary has led to reform of accountability measures in league tables. From September 2015 the benchmark will be the progress (not attainment) of pupils against a suite of 8 subjects. Concerns that accountability measures at primary level favour schools with more

64   http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/watching%20the%20watchmen.pdf
65   https://www.gov.uk/system-leaders-who-they-are-and-what-they-do
66   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-29851020

'socially advantaged' intakes has also led to a reform to accountability measures to focus on progress, rather than attainment – with the introduction of a new test proposed at age 4 or 5, on entry to primary school. There are also concerns that a closer involvement in education by Government ministers has led to a constant 'policy churn'. In addition to the reforms to the accountability measures outlined above, the last 4 years have seen a significant reform of the primary and secondary curriculum to make it 'more academically rigorous' and place greater reliance on tests and end of course examinations rather than coursework.

A new 'English Baccalaureate' has been introduced to increase the focus on core subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history, geography and languages. The regulator Ofqual is currently radically reforming the examination and grading system. Reforms have also been introduced to link pay progression more closely to the performance of Heads and teachers.

Individually, recent reforms have received varying measures of support and engagement from employers and unions. But taken together and introduced to a very tight timetable, they have given rise to concerns about constant policy churn and a significantly increased workload for teachers. Accountability measures and a school's place in league tables have become very high stakes, leading to accusations of a 'narrowing of the curriculum', extreme pressure to 'teach to the test' and the undermining of professional autonomy for teachers and school leaders.

Answers to the Questionnaire and additional notes based on the Peer Learning Visit on 17 and 18 September 2014.

1. How is the social dialogue organised in your country as far as the education sector is concerned?

Under the previous Government there was a well developed and institutionalised social dialogue between Central Government, education employers and unions, founded on a National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload, signed in January 2003[67]. The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG), composed of representatives from the signatories to the agreement, monitored its implementation[68]. It aimed to ensure that teachers did not routinely undertake administrative and clerical tasks; had a reasonable work and life balance; had guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time within the school day, and had a reasonable allocation of time in support of their leadership and management responsibilities. The greater use of teaching assistants in classrooms was a key outcome of the 2003 agreement.

Under the Coalition Government, which came to power in May 2010, social dialogue became much less formal and more fragmented. WAMG was replaced by the Education Forum, which has representation from employers and unions, but is more a forum for the discussion of general education policy and for consultation, but with no decision-making powers. It was initially chaired by the Secretary of State for Education and attended by union leaders but is now chaired by a senior civil servant and attended by representatives of union leaders and employers.

Government now conducts business with the teaching unions and employers through bilateral meetings on specific subjects. For example, regular meetings with the unions have recently been set up to seek to resolve a current dispute. Employers, represented by the National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST) also attend separate meetings with the DfE, head teachers' unions ASCL and NAHT and the National Governors' Association (NGA).

The Government also engages a wider range of stakeholders than unions and employers of council-maintained schools, including representatives of academies, which are independent state schools directly

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67   http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=da76d364-b542-448b-b407-9a2f82ad5da3&groupId=10180
68   ATL, DfES, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, T&G, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government

funded by, and accountable to, Central Government[69]. For example, recent reforms to examinations and the national curriculum have been led by 'expert groups' with representation from individual schools – often academies - rather than the representatives of unions and employers.

The strengths of the current system of bilateral meetings on specific issues include a reduction in the sometimes onerous bureaucracy associated with the monitoring of the National Agreement on workload. It also gives unions and employers the opportunity to articulate their views to the Government clearly, without having to enter into a negotiation with other parties to produce a compromise position. However, allowing the Government to see areas of disagreement between unions and employers strengthens the Government's hand in discussions and decision-making.

The Task Force feels that the lack of a comprehensive national social dialogue, involving all parties, also leads to a disconnect between policy development and detailed implementation, with the Government setting the policy and then leaving it to employers and staff to consider the issues around detailed implementation. The lack of engagement by the Government in implementation means that the cumulative effect of 'initiative overload' is not addressed or discussed. This has led to the worsening of industrial relations, with unions calling a number of national one-day strikes since 2011. Prior to that, the last national teachers' industrial action took place in 2008.

2. Does the government have an explicit quality agenda, comprising targets and programmes that are to enhance the overall quality of education? If yes, provide a brief description.

The government's agenda is very heavily focused on improving the quality of education through structural change in the education system; introducing greater competition between schools; the promotion of improvement through school-to-school collaboration; and a greater focus on teacher performance.

Structural change

The overall focus is on increasing school autonomy to 'free up' schools to drive their own improvement and to support other schools to improve. The 'headline' policy has been structural change and there has been a rapid expansion in the number of academies and 'free schools' which are independent state schools that are directly funded by, and accountable to, central government. Inspired by Swedish Free Schools and Charter Schools in the USA, the number of these has increased from about 200 sponsored academies when the coalition came to power to just under 4,000 currently (out of approximately 22,000 schools in England). Schools that are not academies are known as 'maintained' schools and are funded by, and accountable to local councils.

There are two main types of academies: 'sponsored academies' which bring in an outside sponsor such as an educational trust or an 'academy chain'. The aim is to turn around consistently underperforming schools by bringing in new expertise, capacity and often new leadership and governance. But contrast, 'converter academies' are high-performing schools, sometimes grouped with lower-performing schools, which have chosen to opt out of accountability to local councils and become directly accountable to, and funded by central government. In January 2014 there were about 2,500 converter academies, compared to about 1,000 sponsored academies. There are also 170 free schools, which are new schools opened by groups of parents, teachers or trusts.

Academies have greater freedom from restrictions imposed by central Government, as well as freedom from direct accountability to their local council. They are not bound by the national curriculum or by nationally agreed pay and conditions for staff and have greater freedom over setting the length of the school day and deciding term dates (although all schools will gain these freedoms shortly). A recent survey of academies

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69 58% of Secondary Schools are now academies and about 12% of primary schools. About 30% of pupils in England now study in academies.

by the Reform think tank[70] suggested that they are not making significant use of these freedoms, except in relation to teachers' pay: 59% reported making changes to pay, as compared to 35% varying the national curriculum and 6% planning to change the structure of the school term. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pay changes are more likely to be to senior leaders' pay, rather than that of classroom teachers. One of the key drivers of conversion to academy status was higher levels of funding and greater financial autonomy. A recent Government survey[71] found that 71% of academies said one of the reasons for converting was to "obtain more funding for front line education" and 23% said it was the main reason for converting. The perception that academies are more generously funded than council-maintained schools is based in fact. The latest figures available show that in 2011-2012 the median total income (£ Per Pupil) for secondary academies was £6,340, which is £720 higher per pupil than the median figure for maintained secondary schools. The median figure for primary academies was £4,713, £419[72] higher per pupil than primary schools maintained by councils.

Not all schools choose to become academies. The Coalition Government took powers in 2010 to allow the Secretary of State to require underperforming schools to become academies and the Government's policy is that "there is a clear expectation that where the school has a history of sustained underperformance, conversion to an academy with a strong sponsor will be the normal route to secure improvement."[73] There has been a particular focus on underperforming primary schools and according to a recent report in the Times Educational Supplement, of the 1,983 primary academies nationwide, 570 were 'forced' conversions of this type.[74]

Greater competition between schools

Successive governments have believed that competition and greater parental choice will drive up education standards, with good schools expanding and struggling schools incentivised to improve to avoid seeing a decline in demand for places in their school, a consequent reduction in funding and ultimately closure. To inform parents league tables comparing performance have been introduced and the school inspectorate, Ofsted, publishes the reports of its regular inspections of schools in a format accessible to parents. Most parents who are choosing a school for their child will compare the performance of local schools by looking at the recent inspection reports on the Ofsted website and by consulting exam league tables on the Department for Education website.

The focus on competition has intensified under the current Government and a key aim of the academies programme is to promote greater diversity in the type of schools available to parents and children to encourage greater competition between 'providers'. Ministers frequently make comparisons between the performance of academies/free schools and 'council maintained' schools.

There has also been a greater focus on targets for attainment and progression, supported by national floor targets, which have been gradually increased. Schools falling below the floor can expect an inspection from Ofsted and become eligible for intervention from the Government and possibly forced conversion to an academy.

Ofsted has streamlined its inspection framework to ensure a greater focus on the quality of teaching and school leadership and to make its reports more accessible to parents. The framework has been made more 'rigorous' with schools previously graded 'Satisfactory' now branded 'Requires Improvement' and expected to improve rapidly if they wish to avoid being graded 'inadequate' and required to become an academy.

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70   http://www.reform.co.uk/content/32388/research/education/plan_a_2014

71   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/326163/
      RR366_-_research_report_academy_autonomy_Final.pdf

72   http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/download/SFR24-2013.pdf

73   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306946/SCC_guidance_May2014_FINAL.pdf

74   http://news.tes.co.uk/b/news/2014/04/07/nearly-600-primary-schools-forced-into-academy-status.aspx

Supporting and promoting school-to-school improvement

The Government has also introduced a much stronger emphasis on school-to-school improvement, with the aim of producing a 'self-improving school system'. Some commentators see a tension between this promotion of greater collaboration between schools but at the same time as schools are encouraged to compete. The National Department for Teaching and Leadership, which is an agency of the Department for Education, has been at the heart of promoting stronger collaborative working by schools to drive improvement across the system. The conceptual underpinning is set out in David Hargreaves' 'Creating a self-improving school system'[75], published in July 2010 and followed by a series of papers that develop the thinking and report on progress, culminating in "A self-improving school system: towards maturity"[76], published in October 2012.

Hargreaves identified four building blocks of a self-improving school systems: clusters of schools (the structure); the local solutions approach and co-construction (the two cultural elements); and system leaders (the key people). For our purposes, the key elements are promoting and supporting the clustering of schools to drive improvement and developing system leaders.

The Government, through the National College, has strongly encouraged the development of Teaching Schools, which are schools that are rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and which have the capacity to support other schools to improve teacher training, professional development and classroom practice. Teaching schools can be seen both as system leaders and as part of a drive to cluster schools, in this case through 'Teaching School Alliances'. The Government set a target of establishing 500 teaching schools by March 2015, but the target has already been reached, with 548 already established[77]. The core areas of responsibility of teaching schools are to:

- lead the development of school-led initial teacher training
- offer a range of professional development opportunities for teachers and school support staff
- support and improve other schools, either individual underperforming schools or through a teaching school alliance
- develop successful succession planning strategies to identify and develop people to fill leadership positions in the future
- engage in research and development

The Government, with 'academy chains' or 'multi-academy trusts' developing, is promoting more formal clustering arrangements. More than half of academies are in a chain[78] and the largest chain, the Academies Enterprise Trust, runs 77 schools, although it, and a number of other chains, have been asked by the Government not to expand any further because of concerns about performance. Councils have also promoted the formal federation of groups of schools, either to allow strongly performing schools to support weaker ones by sharing senior leadership capacity, or to strengthen the long-term viability of smaller schools, particularly in rural areas.

As well as promoting Teaching Schools as 'system leaders', the Government has established, through the National College, a network of 'National Leaders of Education' (NLEs) and 'National Leaders of Governance' (NLGs). NLEs are the head teachers of outstanding schools who work with schools in challenging circumstances to support school improvement. NLGs are highly effective chairs of governors who support chairs of governors in other schools through activities such as mentoring and coaching and reviewing the effectiveness of a school's governing body. There are also networks of Local Leaders of Education, who are experienced head teachers that support improvement at other schools and Specialist Leaders of Education, who are experienced middle or senior leaders with a specialism, for example, in mathematics,

75   http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2093/1/download%3Fid%3D133672%26filename%3Dcreating-a-self-improving-school-system.pdf
76   http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15804/1/a-self-improving-school-system-towards-maturity.pdf
77   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strong-school-alliances-driving-up-teaching-standards
78   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328436/Academies_Annual_Report_2012-13.pdf

initial teacher training or behaviour management.

Focusing on teacher performance

Another Government focus has been on improving teacher performance by changing the systems for appraising teachers to link pay progression to performance. Regulations that govern the pay and conditions of teachers at maintained schools (but not academies) were amended in September 2013[79] to provide for the ending of annual incremental pay progression for teachers and the introduction of pay progression linked to performance for all pay progression from September 2013 onwards. Teachers' Standards, which define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status have been updated to support performance management. Capability procedures for dealing with teachers falling below expected standards have been streamlined.

School governing bodies have been encouraged to make sure that pay progression is linked to performance and Ofsted, now asks questions of governors about their understanding of this link and make specific comments in inspection reports about their knowledge of appraisal systems and their link to pay in their schools. The changes to the Ofsted inspection framework have encouraged a focus on the quality of teaching. Observation of lessons by Ofsted inspectors now forms the central part of a school inspection, together with discussions with senior leaders and governors to assess the quality of school leadership. The rigour of Ofsted lesson observations has led to allegations from across the political spectrum that it is promoting 'an Ofsted model of teaching' and the latest revision to the handbook for Ofsted inspectors advises "inspectors must not advocate a particular method of planning, teaching or assessment."[80]

3. Are there any contrasting views on the meaning and interpretation of educational quality in your country, among key actors like: the central government/employers of education and trade unions? If yes, please briefly describe the contested issues

There is widespread support for the increasing emphasis on school-to-school improvement across the spectrum and support for increasing school autonomy, although concerns are growing regarding an increasingly fragmented and overlapping system of accountability for more autonomous schools. However, many aspects of the Coalition Government's education reforms are contested by many local authorities (although not all) and by trade unions. Local parents in some cases have also fiercely contested forced academisation of schools.

Given the rapidity and scale of the recent expansion of the number of schools becoming academies, it is early days to assess the evidence on the benefits of academisation, but interpretations of the data available is contested. In its 'Academies Annual Report 2013-2014[81] the Government compares the performance academies to all 'local authority run schools' and this shows that converter academies do better and that sponsored academies improve faster. However, soon-to-be published research commissioned by the LGA from the National Foundation for Educational Research found "the data so far suggests academy status has made no difference to the progress made in converter academies, compared to similar non-academy schools over the same time period" and "pupil progress in sponsored academies compared to similar non-academies is not significantly different over time when the outcome is measured as GCSE points, excluding equivalent qualifications."

The freedom for academies to hire unqualified teachers has been a major source of controversy. Sixteen per cent of academies have hired unqualified teachers[82] and this has been a major source of contention

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79   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271275/130806_2013_stpcd_master_final.pdf

80   http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook

81   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328436/Academies_Annual_Report_2012-13.pdf

82   https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/326163/
     RR366_-_research_report_academy_autonomy_Final.pdf

with the unions and has been criticised both by the Opposition Labour Party and by the Coalition's junior partners, the Liberal Democrats.

The sheer pace and scale of change under the current Government, its impact on teacher workload and its effect on schools has been widely criticised. As well as the structural reforms already outlined, there has been a very significant reform of the primary and secondary curriculum to make it 'more academically rigorous' and to place far greater reliance on tests and end of course examinations, rather than teacher assessment and coursework. A new 'English Baccalaureate' has been introduced to increase the focus on core subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history, geography and modern and ancient foreign languages. The examination and grading system is currently being radically reformed and this will feed into new accountability measures for schools that focus on student progress and reward a focus on academic subjects.

Individually, these reforms have received varying measures of support and engagement from employers and unions. However, taken together and introduced within a very tight timetable, they have given rise to concerns about constant policy churn, a significantly increased workload for teachers and school leaders. Accountability measures and a school's place in Government-produced league tables have become very high stakes, leading to accusations of a 'narrowing of the curriculum', extreme pressure to 'teach to the test' and the undermining of professional autonomy for teachers and school leaders.

4. Have employers of education in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

Local authorities are the 'employers' in maintained schools but are only 'employers' in a formal sense and in practice the governing bodies of maintained schools undertake the majority of employer functions. Governing bodies delegate their functions to senior leaders as appropriate, although they maintain a key role in the appointment of head teachers and senior leaders. Academies, 'faith schools' (Voluntary Aided Schools) and foundation schools are the employers for staff in their schools.

Given the pace of change initiated by central Government reforms, employers have not generally formulated additional explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness. However councils are responsible for promoting high standards in maintained schools and have powers to intervene in cases of underperformance. Councils have strongly promoted the clustering of schools to support school-to-school improvement, usually on the basis of geographically based clusters. There are many different models of clustering developing, with secondary schools clustering with their feeder primary schools in some areas, but phase-specific (i.e. primary and secondary) clusters in other places[83]. This is partly a pragmatic response to spending cuts imposed by central government, which will see council grants from Government reduce by 40% between 2010 and 2015 (Government grants account for more than 50% of council funding), while school spending has been protected. The money provided to councils to support school improvement is given directly to academies if they chose to convert, so the increasing number of schools converting to become academies has intensified the financial squeeze on councils and forced them to rethink the way they support local schools.

Most maintained schools and some academies still rely on local authorities to provide Human Resource support and councils can support school improvement through the HR function. Most councils continue to invest in recruiting, training and supporting school governors as a way of improving school performance. Councils also make wide use of resources such as teaching schools, NLEs, LLEs and NLGs to support school improvement across their areas.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/323830/leading-governors-the-role-of-the-chair-of-governors-in-schools-and-academies.pdf

83   For examples of developing models of school improvement, see the LGA case study report: http://www.local. gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=16b1eed6-afe6-4b60-a65f-c65073f258d4&groupId=10180

5. Have trade unions in your country formulated explicit policies to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness?

Trade unions offer a wide range of Continual Professional Development (CPD) to their members, targeted at school leaders and aspiring leaders, practitioners, subject specialists and newly-qualified teachers. This includes mentoring to promote leadership development and work to promote diversity in the teaching profession, for example by increasing the number of women in senior leadership roles

The National College, which used to provide training and CPD to staff, has increasingly focused on national Government priorities and now licences other organisations to provide training rather than providing it directly. The squeeze on local authority funding has also reduced their capacity to support staff CPD and both these developments have increased the importance of the trade union role in this area.

As outlined above, as part of a move to a 'school-led' system, the Government has explicitly stepped back from getting involved in the detail of implementation of policy in many areas. Significant cuts to staffing within the Department for Education also means that its capacity to communicate and engage directly with schools is diminishing. So unions have increasingly become involved in communicating with their membership to tell them about planned changes and supporting their members to implement change. This includes trying to provide support to staff in dealing with the pace of change and consequent increase in workload.

6. The table below indicates school autonomy in two domains, expressed as percentages of decisions taken by the school. The two domains are resource allocation and curriculum and assessment policies. For the Netherlands and the UK, on the basis of your information and knowledge, would you say these figures are correct? For Malta: could you provide estimates?[84]. Note: the figures for Italy are just provided for illustrative purpose.

	Resources	Curriculum
Netherlands	85%	91%
UK	76%	80%
Italy	27%	64%
Malta		

The Steering Group felt unable to comment on these estimates because they did not understand which decisions were being included. It commented that although schools had little influence on the level of resources they received, they then had almost complete control of decision-making on finance. They also felt that although in theory there was considerable freedom around the delivery of the curriculum, in practice the focus on high stake accountability 'levels' connected to the National Curriculum left little room for flexibility and innovation.

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84 The figures are based on the 2012 wave of OECD's PISA study and Malta did not participate in this study

7. Do the schools in your country have school boards (in the sense of a distinct decision making level "above" the school?) (if the answer is no, please skip the next question)

School governing bodies or boards play an absolutely central role in the schools system in England and have been the primary means through which schools have been given increasing autonomy. Recent Government guidance has described governing bodies as akin to the boards of companies or charities and as the key strategic decision-making body of every school. Their core functions are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the head teacher accountable for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

There are some differences between the governance arrangements for maintained schools, which are prescribed in statutory regulations and those of academies, which have far more freedom to enshrine their arrangements in the articles of association that establish the academy trust. The main practical difference is likely to be that where academies are part of chains or multi-academy trusts, the decision-making powers may be exercised at the level of the chain rather than the governing body of the individual academy, which may simply have an advisory role. For stand-alone converter academies the governing bodies are likely to be similar to those for maintained schools.

There is also a difference between the governing bodies of faith and foundation schools and academies on one hand and schools directly maintained by councils (community schools) on the other. The governing bodies of faith schools and academies are the employers of staff and set admissions policies, whereas councils are formally the employers and admissions authority for community schools. However, in practice the governing bodies in community schools have almost complete autonomy over decisions about staffing and resource allocation.

Governors are volunteers and are not paid. The regulations governing the membership of maintained schools require membership to include elected parent governors; staff governors (including the head teacher); a local authority governor; and community governors. In faith and foundation schools there is also a category of 'foundation governor' appointed by the diocese or foundation, which must have a majority of 2 over the other types of governors. There is increasing emphasis that governors should have the skills required to fulfil their roles, rather than seeing themselves as representing a particular 'constituency'.

A key responsibility of governing bodies is to appoint the head teacher and other senior staff. They have a specific responsibility for the performance management of the head teacher and oversight of performance management across the school. Their role in approving pay progression of staff has recently been strengthened. The schools inspectorate, Ofsted, has introduced a specific judgement regarding the performance of the governing body and recent inspection reports have commented about the extent to which governors understand the link between pay progression and performance in their school.

The Chair of the governing body, elected by the membership, has a particularly important role in school governance. The Chair's relationship with the head teacher is described by the National College as akin to that of a chair of a board of trustees who works with the chief executive of an organisation but does not run day-to-day operations. Key roles include leading effective governance; building the team; maintaining a focus on school improvement; and "leading the business".

8. Please indicate with a percentage the following priority areas in what is formally expected from primary and secondary school boards in your country: (high percentages indicate high priority)

a. Supervising financial affairs 40%
b. Supervising personnel policies 5%
c. Taking responsibility for legal issues 5%
d. Monitoring and stimulating the quality of school education 25%
e. Setting the vision, ethos and strategic direction 25%

(the percentages for these priority areas should sum up to 100%)

9. Would you say that the degree to which school boards and school governors are expected to be responsible for school quality is increasing or decreasing?

    a. Increasing
    There has been ever-increasing emphasis placed on the key role of governors in supporting and promoting continuous improvement in schools. This has been reinforced by a specific judgement by Ofsted on the governing body's performance in leading school improvement as part of its 'leadership and management judgement'.
    Central and local government and the National Governors' Association have focused on improving the quality of the governance through guidance, training and development. The National Colleges has licensed a leadership development programme for Chairs of Governors and most councils provide training and support to local governors. The Government has changed regulations to put the emphasis on governors being recruited for their skills, rather than on their ability to represent key stakeholders in the community. The governing bodies of all maintained schools have been required to reconstitute and encouraged to become smaller and more skills-focused.

10. How autonomous are teachers in your country in terms of the degree to which they have decision-making authority in the domains of: a) curriculum and instruction and b) student policies?

    The feeling in the Task Force was that whatever the theoretical autonomy of teachers in these areas, time pressures, the pace of change and the high-stakes accountability regime they are working under significantly restricts their autonomy and ability to be innovative. The focus on literacy and numeracy; the pressure to achieve high levels of attainment and progress in core subjects; and the narrow focus of the Ofsted inspection regime encourages schools to be risk-averse. Inspiring leadership, which is prepared to take risks and allow teachers to be innovative with the curriculum and student policies can help. However, the consensus is that in practice, the current system allows little space for teacher autonomy and innovation.

11. Does your country have a national programme to enhance teacher professionalisation?
    If yes, describe and (if applicable) refer to the involvement of employers of education and trade unions.

    The national programme, set out on the Department for Education's website, is:
    To improve the way in which new teachers are trained, we are:
    - Expanding school-led initial teacher training (ITT) through School Direct
    - Encouraging more schools to become accredited providers of ITT
    - Only allocating places to ITT providers that Ofsted has graded as 'good' or 'outstanding'
    - Increasing the number of high-achieving graduates teaching in disadvantaged schools by expanding Teach First, an employment-based teacher training programme
    - Providing opportunities for former members of the armed forces to receive teacher training through the Troops to Teachers programme
    To raise the status of the teaching profession and make it more attractive, we are:
    - Giving teachers and school leaders more freedom to use their professional judgement, reducing day-to-day bureaucracy and unnecessary government prescription
    - Encouraging more high-quality new teachers into priority subjects through: training bursaries of up to £20,000 and tax-free scholarships worth £25,000 in mathematics, chemistry, physics and computing
    - Making it easier for schools to attract outstanding teachers by giving them more flexibility over pay
    To improve the quality of school leadership at all levels, we are:
    - Introducing new arrangements for leadership pay that will give schools greater flexibility to attract and reward good leaders from September 2014

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- Reviewing the national standards for head teachers
- Introducing a programme in 2015 to get exceptional school leaders to work in schools that find it difficult to attract talented head teachers
- Encouraging school leaders to develop their skills through new qualifications for head teachers (NPQH), senior school leaders (NPQSL) and middle leaders (NPQML)
- Continuing to recognise and support national school leaders who work to improve education in their area through the appointment of national leaders of education; national leaders of governance; local leaders of education; and specialist leaders of education.

12. How is school performance monitored in your country:

    a. By means of quantitative outcome indicators, based on examinations and/or achievement tests
    b. By means of school inspection
    c. **By means of a combination of quantitative outcome indicators and inspections**
    d. In another way (please describe)

13. What are the ultimate consequences of below standards school performance: (more than one alternative may be checked)

    a. **Closure of the school**
    b. Financial sanctions
    c. **Public announcement of sub-standard performance**
    d. **An intensified monitoring regime**
    e. **Temporary extra external support to improve future performance**
    f. **Forced conversion to become a sponsored academy**

14. Which priority ordering (1-3) would apply to your country as far as emphasis in school accountability is concerned

    a. oriented to inform higher administrative levels (2)
    b. oriented to support parents' choice of schools (1)
    c. oriented to internal and professional feedback (3)

15. Is the accountability regime in the field of education generally accepted or contested, in your country? Please select one of the responses below.

It is generally accepted (☐)
It is contested (☑)
If it is contested, on which grounds? You may want to refer to the following possible issues:
    ☑ **A narrowing impact on school priorities (teaching to the test)**
    ☐ Disadvantages of low stakes testing (students' not making a real effort)
    ☑ **Limitations to the professional autonomy of schools and teachers)**

There are concerns that the very high stakes accountability within the system has a narrowing impact on school priorities. The evidence for this is that accountability measures have been changed because schools are perceived as trying to 'game' the system. For example the standard benchmark for secondary schools has been the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs (the national test taken at 16 years of age) including English and Mathematics at grades A-C. However, concerns have been raised that this has encouraged schools to focus on a narrower range of subjects and focus on improving the results of students on the C/D boundary at the expense of other pupils. From September 2015 the benchmark will

be the progress (not attainment) of pupils against a suite of 8 subjects. There have also been concerns that some schools have used 'GCSE equivalents' more heavily than more 'rigorous' GCSE to improve their standing in league tables. Thus, the use of GCSE equivalents in the accountability measures is being significantly reduced.

Teachers and unions have also expressed concerns that the high stakes accountability exercised through Ofsted inspections reduces the professional autonomy of schools and teachers. They feel that it encourages a focus on 'Ofsted-approved' teaching methods and forces schools that are given, or are in danger of receiving, poor Ofsted judgements, to focus excessively on passing their Ofsted inspection rather than on improving outcomes for pupils. They are concerned that the judgements of Ofsted inspectors are not always consistent and that some inspectors lack the skills and recent experience of teaching to qualify them to make very high-stakes judgements about schools. A recent report by the think-tank Policy Exchange, "Watching the Watchmen"[85] endorsed these concerns and called for all Ofsted inspectors to have recent and relevant experience in schools. It suggested that Ofsted inspectors should not observe teaching in classrooms as part of an inspection, but should focus on validating schools' self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and how it compares to data about progress and attainment.

16. On the basis of research studies (and if these are not available on the basis of your experience), how would you estimate the amount of working time the average school leader in your country spends on the following activities: (please indicate by means of percentages, summing to 100%)

   a.   Representative duties   15%
   b.   Administrative tasks   5%
   c.   Coordinating and monitoring teaching and learning   55%
   d.   Active interaction with external stake-holders   15%
   e.   Human resources management and human resources development of staff 10%
   f.   Other duties, please describe   0%

   These figures are loosely based on the 'average hours worked by heads' figures in the Teachers workload diary survey 2013[86] but the categories don't match and separate figures are given in the survey for primary and secondary leaders.

17. Would you please give a rank-ordering of school leadership orientations as they represent emphases given in your country to certain orientations:
   a.   integral leadership, in the sense of a combination of instructional and transactional leadership
   b.   instructional leadership (primarily oriented toward optimizing the teaching and learning programme)
   c.   transactional leadership (primarily oriented to school improvement and organisation development)
   d.   integral leadership in the sense of a broad spectrum of orientations (internal productivity, responsiveness to external stakeholders, human relations orientation, and creating functional cultural and structural conditions)

18. On the basis of your own experience or research studies, how would you rate the frequency of application of distributed leadership in primary and secondary schools in your country:

   a.   happens in all schools
   b.   **happens in about 75% of the schools**

85   http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/watching-the-watchmen-the-future-of-school-inspections-in-england
86   Figure 10, page 25 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285941/DFE-RR316.pdf

c. happens in about 50% of the schools

d. happens in about 25% of the schools

e. does not occur

But the scope for distributed leadership will depend on the size of the school, with small primary schools having significantly fewer opportunities to distribute leadership across a smaller number of staff.

19. Please indicate the priority given to certain strategies to enhance educational quality by different actors and stakeholders (by rank-ordering form 1 to 5, each of the alternative strategies, from the perspective of each stakeholder):

	Central government	Local school boards	School leaders	Trade unions	Employers, other than central government	Teachers
Personnel policies, teacher empowerment	3	3	2	1	1	3
Curriculum alignment and opportunity to learn	3	3	3	3	5	2
Formative assessment	5	5	5	5	5	2
Implementation of effective teaching strategies	2	2	1	3	2	1
Pronounced leadership orientations	1	1	3	2	3	5

6

Chapter 6: Comparison, Analyses and Conclusions of the Study

By Jaap Scheerens, Professor Educational and Management at University of Twente (the Netherlands).

Comparative overview of the three national case studies of the Netherlands, Malta and England

In this chapter the answers to the twenty questionnaire items from the three countries are summarised and compared. Results are analysed, leading up to the conclusions of this study.
The overview is structured by following the sequence that was used in the questionnaire that was applied to structure the national case study reports.

How the social dialogue is organised

The Netherlands has a fairly developed and institutionalised social dialogue between the Ministry of Education, Employers and Trade Unions. In Malta, where the Ministry for Education and Employment is the main employer in education for state schoolteachers, tight working relationships exist with trade unions. In England, institutionalised tri-partite consultation has been replaced by a more fragmented set of bilateral meetings. This may lead to a disconnection between policy making and policy implementation.

The government's quality agenda

All three countries have quality agendas put forward by the central level. In all three countries quality indicators and performance standards have been formulated. In England this comes together with a number of structural changes, which emphasise school autonomy, competition between schools, school-to-school improvement (networks) and a tight monitoring of teachers' performance.

The degree to which contrasting views of educational quality exist

In the Netherlands, there is high consensus on the importance of student performance as well as the professional development of teachers and head teachers. There is an ongoing debate regarding the broad educational goals and the amount of testing. In Malta, a certain tension was noted between regarding the many initiatives from the Ministry of Education, and the difficulty of schools to keep up with the changes (innovation overload). In England, the government's initiative to create "academies" is rather contested. Fear exists, particularly with the trade unions, that the high stakes accountability regime leads to a narrowing of the curriculum (as is the case in the Netherlands).

Specific school leader policies by the employers of education

The employers of education in the Netherlands have been active in indicating school leader competencies, professional development activities and the creation of a register of school leaders. In Malta, emphasis is given to continuous professional development of school leaders. In England, given the pace and scope of government induced change there are no specific policies from employers to stimulate school leaders' effectiveness.

Specific school leader policies by trade unions

In all three countries trade unions have a strong focus on teacher quality, autonomy and professionalisation. In the Netherlands, separate trade unions are active in stimulating the professionalisation of school leaders as well. The teacher union is a partner in policy development with the Ministry of Education in Malta. Regarding

England, trade unions support a wide range of professional development activities for teachers and head teachers.

School autonomy with respect to resources and the curriculum
Schools have autonomy in both domains in the Netherlands. Malta has a national curriculum, while teachers have limited space to divert from centrally mandated textbooks. Schools in England do not have strong influence on the amount of resources they receive but a considerable amount of freedom in the way they apply resources. As far as the curriculum is concerned there is freedom in the delivery of the curriculum, but constrained by the accountability requirements.

Existence and position of school boards
In the Netherlands school boards are the "competent authorities" of schools. They take on responsibility for school quality. The situation is moving from boards that consist of laypersons to boards with professional backgrounds. In Malta there are no school boards, although schools may have parental involvement. In the English school system, school boards have a central role with respect to vision, strategy, ethos, performance management and overseeing the financial performance of the school. Academies form a new school type that register directly under the Ministry of Education. The importance of school boards is increasing in England and in the Netherlands.

Autonomy of teachers
With respect to the Netherlands, international figures from the OECD and the EU show that teacher autonomy is average as compared to other countries. The autonomy of teachers in Malta is limited to the way they choose to cooperate with their colleagues and the process of teaching. In England the common opinion is that the current educational structures and policies give little room for teacher autonomy and innovation.

National programmes to enhance teacher professionalism
In all three countries high priority is given to teacher development, both with respect to initial training and continuous professional development. In England a larger share of initial training is now given as service training in schools (which are indicated as teaching schools).

How educational performance is monitored
In the Netherlands, quality of a school is measured by the Inspectorate, by school boards (horizontal supervision) and by the schools themselves, known as a school self-evaluation. Malta has a degree of school based internal evaluation as well as an external review. An external review provides the authorities with a snapshot of the realities facing schools on specific dimensions. The executive summary of the external review report is shared with all members of the school community. The whole external review report is handed to the Head of School and Board of Governors or equivalent, where these exist, and may be disclosed to the public at the discretion of the Head of School. School quality in England is monitored on the basis of a combination of school Inspection and quantitative performance indicators.

The ultimate consequences of below standard school performance
In the Netherlands and in England, the closure of a school (withholding financial support) is the ultimate consequence. Both countries post school performance data publicly. In Malta more intense monitoring and school support are the consequences in case of below standard performance.

Priorities of clients in school accountability
In the Netherlands, schools (learning and feedback) are seen as the most important client, followed by the consumers of educational and higher administrative levels. Parents are seen as the most important recipient, followed by higher administrative levels and the schools themselves in England. In Malta the accountability system covers both external and internal professional feedback.

The acceptance of the accountability system

Both in the Netherlands and in England concerns are raised against the accountability regime, mostly based on the fear of a narrowing curriculum and loss of teacher autonomy. At the same time in both countries accountability measures are broadly implemented and applied, to which could be added that the stakes for schools and teachers in England are higher than in the Netherlands. In Malta, there is a conscious effort to maintain a balance between accountability and ongoing school improvement. Both internal and external school community members are recognised as contributing and benefitting stakeholders. There are no signs of strong protest against central external evaluation except for concern regarding innovation overload.

Priorities in how school leaders spent their working time

In the Netherlands and Malta administrative duties take most of the time. In the Netherlands monitoring teaching and learning comes second. In England the latter is true, with emphasis placed in managing teaching and learning, which takes most of the working time.

Orientations in school leadership

It was estimated that in the Netherlands *integral leadership* should be the preferred style, given the broad expectations on what school leaders should accomplish. In Malta, transformational leadership was mentioned although the predominant style is transactional leadership. School Leaders are expected to carry out the majority of what can be described as administrative duties, which means that they cannot devout more time to being with teachers to facilitate distributed forms of leadership and work on the teaching and learning dimension (i.e. instructional leadership). However, it has to be acknowledged that efforts to improve this situation are gradually moving things forward. An overall picture for England could not be given.

Estimated rate of distributive leadership

Judging from international studies, the Netherlands is not ranked particularly high in their distributive leadership. In England it was estimated that 75% of schools were somehow involved with distributed leadership. In Malta "shared practices" of school leaders and teachers are being stimulated.

Priorities among stakeholders in the three countries of preferred improvement strategies

Summary table on question 19: the priority given to certain strategies to enhance educational quality by different actors and stakeholders (by rank-ordering from 1 to 5, each of the alternative strategies, from the perspective of each stakeholder). Figures for the Netherlands are indicated in regular print, Malta in bold and England in italics.

	Central government	Local school boards	School leaders	Trade unions	Employers, other than central government	Teachers
Personnel policies, teacher empowerment	2, **3**, *3*	1,**Na**, *3*	3, **1**, *2*	1, **1**, *1*	3, **Na**, *1*	1, **2**, *3*
Curriculum alignment and opportunity to learn	5, **1**, *3*	5, **Na**, *3*	5, **2**, *3*	5, **3**, *3*	5, **Na**, *5*	4, **4**, *2*
Formative assessment	1, **2**, *5*	3, **Na**, *5*	2, **4**, *5*	2, **2**, *5*	2, **Na**, *5*	3, **3**, *2*
Implementation of effective teaching strategies	4, **5**, *2*	4, **Na**	4, **3**, *1*	3, **5**, *3*	4, **Na**, *2*	2, **1**, *2*
Pronounced leadership orientations	3, **4**, *1*	2, **Na**, *4*	1, **5**, *3*	4, **4**, *2*	1, **Na**, *3*	5, **5**, *5*

These ratings indicate that there was full consensus between the three countries on two strategy/stakeholder combinations: namely that *trade unions* in all three countries gave the highest priority to <u>personnel policies and teacher empowerment</u>, and that *teachers* gave the lowest priority to pronounced leadership orientations. Overall, across countries, relatively high priority is given to <u>personnel policies and teacher empowerment</u>. Relatively low priority is given to <u>curriculum alignment and opportunities to learn</u>. An interesting difference between England and the Netherlands is the relatively low rating of <u>formative assessment </u>in England, versus a relatively high rating of this strategy in the Netherlands. Employers rate <u>pronounced leadership </u>somewhat higher than trade unions.

Further comparative analyses and conclusions

Issues that were highlighted in the three countries
Leadership successes that were noted in the Netherlands were strong collaboration among the main stakeholders (employers, trade unions *and* the central government) on issues concerning quality in education. Apart from institutionalised structures for social dialogue, a number of sector wide and partial agreements regulate common issues. From the perspective of rational planning; the fact that explicit quality indicators were formulated by both the central government and the employers organisations is a strong point. A broad set of policy measures has been initiated to support improvement efforts to attain the quality aims. These include: stimulation of the role of formative evaluation as part of the policy on "achievement oriented work" (Dutch:

opbrengstgericht werken), stimulation of the "teachers agenda", by means of a teacher register, improvement action at the level of initial teacher training, continuous professional development, and stimulation of induction programmes for beginning teachers. As well as bottom up school improvement on a broad range of themes as part of the programme "Schools have the initiative" (Dutch: *School aan Zet)*; stimulation of evidence based innovation, new forms of school self evaluation, e.g the programme "Frameworks for Responsibility" (Dutch *Vensters voor Verantwoording),* as well as adaptations in school inspection to support "excellence". As a possible downside of the elaborate communication and negotiation structure is processes lack efficiency and high administrative overhead might eventually be an issue.

Malta went through a series of important structural reforms. These involved changing to a comprehensive secondary school and a new governance structure to devolve central authority through a system of college networks. Teacher empowerment is also high on the Malta improvement agenda. Within a structure that is controlled from the centre (particularly in the curriculum domain), Malta is working on an ambitious agenda of procedural improvement, in areas like the use of ICT, formative evaluation (assessment for learning) and teacher collaboration. Educational research and improved data use in schools is another issue on this agenda. Some evidence indicates that the sharing of good practices within and across schools is improving. The scale of the system facilitates close contacts between the central government and the trade unions. The major draw back of the current situation is that a certain "innovation overload" is experienced in the field. More school support would be required to assist schools to come to terms with the many appeals to change.

Positive general points with respect to quality oriented educational policy in England are that, in times of general austerity, the education budget has been spared, that there is broad support for the school improvement agenda, and that initiatives to build system leadership are widely supported. Schools in England have a longer tradition with systematic methods to monitor educational quality, through inspections and test based accountability systems then most European countries. For an outsider, the marks that this made on schools became visible during the school visits that were part of the Peer Learning Visits. Despite critical comments, school improvement on a 'grassroots' level in England appears to be supported by diagnostic use of performance data. Similarly leadership and school governors roles appear to have become "data based" as well. The market oriented strands in English educational policy sometimes appears to be at odds with the improvement agenda, where one would emphasise competition and the other collaboration between schools.

More problematic facets are a certain breach between policy initiatives from the centre and implementation in the field. The institutionalisation of social dialogue seems to be diminishing, which might lead to increased distance between policymaking and implementation. The scope of changes in major education instruments like: inspection, examinations and mandatory testing, teacher training and the curriculum are remarkable. Together with the change in school types, through the introduction of "academies" the term "innovation overload" that was used in the Malta case study appears to be applicable in England. The case study report speaks of a constant "policy churn" that leads to strong pressure placed on schools.

Conclusions in terms of common issues and country specific good practices
Educational policy and governance oriented to quality improvement are complex affairs. On important issues straightforward and categorical classifications are at risk of being simplifications. The first series of conclusions reflect this by pointing at seemingly internally conflicting tendencies, of the nature "autonomy *but* centralisation tendencies as well ". A second series of conclusions points to common issues across countries and stakeholders, and a third summarises those areas where there is clear variation between the three countries.

Issues that reflect a certain internal tension

An increasing role for intermediary organisations and stakeholders but strong input from the central government as well
In the Netherlands and England the role of school boards is increasing, and employers organisations have obtained a clear position. At the same time there is a strong lead from the centre in setting priorities, indicating quality agendas, evoking changes and monitoring performance. In Malta the improvement agenda is driven by the central government as well as the Ministry of Education. While autonomy is written in capitals on the flag of educational policy in all three countries, this is, first, autonomy induced and regulated from the centre, and, secondly, also substantively shaped by the centre (by means of quality standards, improvement targets, prescribed governance structures, use of obligatory instruments, and setting financial conditions). When the question is raised about the effectiveness of autonomy that is in this way "constrained", particularly by accountability requirements, a provocative answer might be that perhaps the centralistic elements in the centralisation/decentralisation mix are as important as making space for professional autonomy and responsiveness to local context.

Considerable consensus on improvement agendas, yet "policy churn" and "innovation overload"
The term "policy churn" refers to frequent new policy initiatives by the centre, which is sometimes replaced by others before having had the chance of being implemented. It was used in the English case study description. In the case study description regarding Malta, the term "innovation overload" was coined. In the Dutch case study a similar concern was not explicitly noted, but the phenomenon also exists with respect to educational policy in the Netherlands, as is described in a recent report from the Education Council. Despite policy churn the impression is that there is, at the same time, a fair amount of stability in quality oriented policy, initiated from the central government. There is adequate support for sufficient elements of these policies for considerable acceptance in the field, in all three countries.

A degree of antagonism in the roles of employers and stakeholders as collaborators of central government and autonomous schools
In the Netherlands and Malta, social partners have been committed to central government policies on educational quality, through formal or informal agreements. In England the central employers' organisation has become detached from the government, but at local school levels boards work in line with central policies. At the same time, social partners are also defending the position of schools and teachers, in the English case study it was mentioned that trade unions are even defining their role as helping schools to "defend" against central policy. Employers differ from trade unions in their focus on governance and leadership (employers) and teacher professional development and empowerment (trade unions).

A critical orientation towards accountability requirements, yet broad application and an "armed" acceptance by schools
In the Netherlands and England, accountability requirements, in the form of testing and external school inspection, are criticized on the basis of "narrowing" the curriculum to core cognitive outcomes and, in England, specific teaching approaches that inspectors would favour. Part of this argument is also that broad education, social and non-cognitive aims suffer from these accountability regimes. In Malta a formative role of evaluation is more prominent, even in the case of external school evaluation, so that high stakes accountability appears to be less of an issue. At the same time, in actual practice, there appears to be broad acceptance by schools. In the Netherlands, for example, this is apparent from the positive judgments of schools when they are asked to appraise school inspection. In England use of tests in context of teacher appraisal appears to have become part of everyday school life. In the Netherlands, formative assessment as part of the policy "achievement oriented work" is growing in importance and sophistication. Yet, the acceptance appears to be an "armed" acceptance, and external accountability remains a challenging area in order to reach workable compromises. When comparing the outlook of employers and trade unions, it would appear that employers, particularly

also school boards, are more positive about accountability requirements, while trade unions often support the critical sounds from the teaching field.

Issues on which there is consistency between countries and stakeholders

Professional development of teachers and school leaders
In all three countries professional development of teachers and school leaders has high priority. It is likewise emphasised by employers and trade unions. Employers are more focused on school leaders than trade unions, although in the Netherlands some trade unions are active in stimulating professional development of school leaders. For trade unions, the emphasis is on strengthening teacher professionalism and teacher empowerment. Earlier reports from EFEE and ETUCE have documented professional development needs and provisions across countries (EFEE, 2012. ETUCE, 2012). When it comes to indicating improvement strategies professional development is ranked highest as compared to other strategies.

Distributed leadership as the preferred leadership orientation

Theoretically, distributed leadership is the ideal combination of strengthening both the professional autonomy of teachers and school leaders. The case study reports that of the three countries documented the preference is geared towards distributive leadership. More elaborated empirical study would be required to study the way distributive leadership is getting shape. Interpretations range from an expansion of deputy-leadership and middle management at school to teacher participation and "teacher leadership".

External and internal evaluation as stimulants of educational quality
In all three countries the role of internal and external evaluation has increased. An important part of the evaluations is dedicated to monitoring educational outcomes. The way formative and summative evaluations stimulate educational quality is both motivational and cognitive. Both external summative and internal formative evaluations enhance achievement orientation. In formative evaluations there are strong expectations about stimulating learning based on data use, feedback and diagnosis. The relevance of school self evaluation has been documented in an earlier EFEE and ETUCE report (EFEE/ETUCE, 2013)

Relatively low priority for curriculum strategies as a lever for improvement
Across the three countries, and across stakeholders' curriculum, strategies rank rather low as an approach for quality improvement. Seen from the perspective of empirical results of school effectiveness research like this could be seen as conspicuous. Curriculum standards and the "opportunity to learn", in the sense of strong alignment between educational content that is taught and tested or appraised in examinations, has received support as the relatively highest way to effectively enhance conditions (Marzano, 2003,[87] Scheerens, 2013)[88]

Issues on which countries vary in important ways

Degree of school autonomy
Clearly, among the three countries, school autonomy is comparatively less in Malta. The Netherlands and the UK rank high on international comparisons on school autonomy. In the international surveys school autonomy

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87   Marsano, R., (2003) *What works in schools. Translating research into action.* Alexandria,
     VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
88   Scheerens, J., (2013) *What is Effective Schooling.* Paper for the International Bacalaureate Organization. Washington
     http://www.ibo.org/research/resources/documents/WhatisEffectiveSchoolingFINAL.pdf

is usually defined as the percentage of decisions in domains like: curriculum, instruction, personnel policies and use of resources, that is taken by the school. Given earlier conclusions, one would almost be tempted to make a distinction between factual and 'subject' experienced autonomy. In both the Netherlands and England the subjectivity experienced autonomy in the field appears to be less than suggested by the research outcomes. In both cases this impression in the field was shaped by the constraints experienced from the accountability requirements.

Degree of institutionalisation of the social dialogue
Among the three countries, social dialogue appears to be most institutionalised in the Netherlands. Perhaps this state of affairs should be seen as the long tradition in the Netherlands to have diversity in a wide variety of factions, but to also create structures for negotiation to reach consensus (also known as the *Polder-model*). In England at the central level, structured communication between the employers' organisations and the Ministry has been diminished; yet, on a local level the role of school boards are strongly established. In Malta the contacts between the central government and the trade unions do not seem to require much institutionalisation, as direct communication is relatively easy given the size of the country.

Differences in the priorities given to formative evaluations
In both the Netherlands and in England's schools, internal testing practices are clearly present; it is interesting to note that in the Netherlands this is seen as a formative evaluation. While in England formative evaluation is not highly rated as a lever of educational quality. During the school visit in London it appeared that the testing of students' progress was used to support teaching and learning (as was the case in the Netherlands), but it is also used as a means to appraise teachers. Malta intends to implement formative evaluation, under the heading of "assessment for learning".

High and low stakes in accountability
When comparing the three countries regarding the consequences of below standard performance; stakes are highest for English schools, followed by the Netherlands and Malta, who have relatively low stake evaluations.

Conclusions in terms of brief answers to the core questions of this study

Brief answers to the core questions of this study, as listed in the introductory chapter, are presented, following a citation of each question.

How is the social dialogue in education organised in the Peer Learning countries? How are social partners involved in School Leadership?
Malta is different from The Netherlands and England, as the central government is the sole employer of education. In England and the Netherlands employers are organised nationally in the Local Government Association (England) and by sector tied councils in the Netherlands. Next, in these two countries, school boards fulfil the role of the employer at local levels. The Foundation of Education, through partial and sector wide agreements, in which the central government is also represented, institutionalises social dialogue in the Netherlands. In England local school boards have strongly established functions.

What are the key issues and concerns of employers and trade unions on target setting, mechanisms to improve quality and the division of responsibilities between the main actors?
In all three countries the central government has a leading role in setting the targets and defining quality agendas. In the Netherlands, the employers have participated in the creation of these national priorities, and also operationalised performance indicators and professional standards in more detail. However, the trade unions have been critical regarding the way the ministry designs and issues educational policies. This is done only through the channel of the education employer-organisations, as there is no backing of the

teacher unions. Occasionally trade unions have been involved in professional development programmes for school leaders. Employers and school boards in England appear to be working with the government induced standards to implement improvement policies in schools. Trade unions in England put themselves in the service of schools to strengthen professional autonomy and occasionally "buffer" against what is felt as a heavy agenda of changes. Trade unions cooperate with the central government in Malta to adopt new policy initiatives. In all three countries social partners find one another in stimulating professional development in regards to teachers and school leaders.

Patterns of functional decentralisation, with regards to accountability and evaluation, in the sense of who decides on a particular facet, e.g. are standardised tests being used, the use of absolute and relative norms, who is responsible for the management of feedback?

In all three countries the functional domain where school autonomy is largest is the primary process of teaching at a classroom level. In Malta, decisions regarding curriculum, including the choice of textbooks, are controlled by the central government. The Netherlands and England have considerable autonomy in domains like the curriculum, personnel management, and the way resources are applied. Examinations and high stakes tests are established by the central government in all three countries. In the Netherlands and England schools are autonomous in the selection of instruments for school self-evaluation and formative student assessment. Management of feedback and use of the results on formative evaluations belongs to the discretion of schools in all three countries.

What are critical levers for enhancing educational effectiveness, at different levels of responsibility: school governors, principals and teachers?

The perceptions on effectiveness enhancing strategies that were collected in this study show that in all countries and among the stakeholders much is expected from teacher professional development and teacher empowerment. Employers also expect much from effective school leadership. Opinions on the effectiveness of formative evaluation differ between countries, with relative high emphasis expected in the Netherlands and a low emphasis in England.

What is the state of the art on the issue of schools using the information from internal and external evaluation to improve teaching and learning?

Empirical studies in the Netherlands that have evaluated projects on "achievement oriented work", in which frequent formative testing and feedback is an essential characteristic, indicate that teachers need support in learning to interpret test research, and even more in making the step from test based diagnosis to didactic actions, to remedy certain deficits (Schildkamp and Visscher, 2009).[89] From the school visits in London the impression was obtained that, at least in the selected schools, tests were used intensively for remedial didactic action, as well as for teacher appraisal.

What are the proven successes and good practices in the Peer Learning Countries, and alternatively, what are the problematic areas and "blank spots" in different national settings?

A more elaborate answer to this question has already been given in an earlier section of this chapter, under the heading *Leadership successes and challenges that were highlighted in the three countries.* Key words for the Netherlands are: institutionalised social dialogue and broad commitment on quality agenda's. For Malta: important structural reforms and an elaborate innovation agenda in a centralised system. Regarding England: many instrumental and structural reforms, high commitment at all levels to enhance student achievement, certain tensions between policy making and policy implementation in the field.

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89   Schildkamp, K. & Visscher, A.J. (2009). Factors influencing the utilization of a school self-evaluation instrument. Studies in educational evaluation, 35(4), 150–159.

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Chapter 7: ESSDE Joint Declaration

The European Social Partners in education EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education), have worked jointly during the years 2013- 2014 on "**Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient leadership** – *the role of employers' organisations and trade unions*". This work is supported by the European Commission through the Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations budget line (VS/2013/0344).

EFEE and ETUCE are committed to improve the quality of education in Europe and as such wish to make an active contribution to the implementation of the Council Conclusions on **Effective leadership in education** of 25–26 November 2013. We are especially committed to the invitation of the Council of Education ministers to " Support, in accordance with national circumstances and with due respect for the principle of equity, new ways of enhancing the effective and accountable autonomy of education institutions and educational leaders."

The European Social Partners in education wish to stress that the issue of high quality and effective school leadership is a priority for their members, the national social partners in education, at national level, but certainly also at local and regional level.

Strong and effective leadership is important in the European schools of the 21st century, as strong and effective leadership is a key driver for educational changes necessary for a modern European education system able to face social and economic challenges like growth, competitiveness and social cohesion.

Moreover, as international studies show, school leaders are expected to play a key role in the maintenance and improvement of educational quality (McKinsey, 2010).

And therefore, the increased recognition of the responsibility of school leaders for school quality and performance (i.e. student attainment and teacher performance) were important starting points for our research and our Peer Learning Activities. School leaders are an important stakeholder group for both the employers' organisations and trade unions, as they are the link between school management and teachers, between different levels of education and training, families, the local community and the labour market. School leaders also have a crucial responsibility in ensuring the creation of a safe and conducive environment for teaching and learning and student success.

This declaration is **addressed** to social partners in education and their national, regional and local members, the European Institutions, school leaders and interested stakeholders at European or national and local level (Ministries of Education, Municipalities, schools, trade unions, students associations, parents associations, local representatives etc.).

The **aim** of this declaration is fivefold, as the European Social Partners in education we wish to:

· Promote effective educational leadership and involve national members in promoting effective educational leadership at national, regional and local level;
· Share the main findings of the dialogue between employers' organisations and trade unions during the working groups, research, peer learning visits and final conference;
· Contribute jointly to the improvement of industrial relations in the education sector in the EU;
· Work jointly and continuously on the improvement of the quality of education in Europe;
· Inform the European institutions as well as other interested stakeholders on their shared point of view on the topic of school leadership.

Both EFEE and ETUCE agree with the Council of Ministers that educational leadership can be effective when:

· educational leaders are in a position to focus primarily on improving the quality of teaching and learning within their institutions while ensuring equity;
· leadership is based on clearly defined roles;
· it adopts a collaborative and inclusive approach;
· it is able to recognise the strengths and competences of staff members and assign leadership roles to them;

- it is in a position to allocate resources and to explore innovative teaching approaches;
- it remains fully accountable to, and has the support of not only national, but also local and regional authorities and the community at large, particularly when endeavouring to introduce changes.

The focus points of our research on **School Leadership and the role of the European Social Partners in education** as well as of the themes of our Peer Learning Visits to Netherlands, Malta and the United Kingdom, were *professional autonomy, accountability and efficient leadership*. We are aware that international research done by the OECD confirms that autonomy and accountability go together: greater autonomy in decisions relating to curricula, assessments and resource allocation tend to be associated with better student performance, particularly when schools operate within a culture of accountability (OECD 2009).

Accountability in education means that schools should provide information on their performance and functioning to outside parties. Accountable school leaders are responsible for an open school environment that should provide information on the quality of education, or on the "well-functioning" of the education provision. Quality is a rather general term. In actual practice, concerns may relate to a good choice of educational objectives (*relevance*) or to the question whether the educational objectives are actually attained (*effectiveness*). There may also be an emphasis on fair and equal distribution of educational resources (*equity*) or specific concern with an economic use of these resources (*efficiency*).

Recognition that schools and thus school leaders as such, are to be accountable to other stakeholders than just the external inspection is a basic requirement for democracy. Particularly when this concerns the immediate users of educational provisions, such as students, pupils, and parents. Information from monitoring and evaluation can be seen as a basis for more direct democracy in education. In its turn, more influence from the immediate users is also seen as a stimulant of effectiveness and efficiency (EFEE/ETUCE report on School Leadership, 2014).

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EFEE and the ETUCE wish to conclude their work in this field and their peer learning activities by inviting their members to contribute to make educational leadership more attractive, particularly inviting them to:
- Promote school autonomy and the autonomy of school leaders. This could be done from a resources point of view or from a curriculum point of view, or both, depending on the national and regional context. There is not one European model that fits all, but our research reconfirms that autonomous and accountable school leaders can play an important role in the well functioning of the school, in teacher performance and in improvement of student attainments. Greater autonomy should go hand in hand with greater accountability.
- Advocate for the strengthening of pedagogical leadership in schools and the capacity of, and opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership in an environment where there is freedom to innovate and a balance between autonomy and accountability;
- Improve the professionalisation of teachers through distributed leadership and teacher autonomy as these are key features to the professional development of teachers and to the development of accountable and effective teachers;
- Help to ensure professional standards of school boards and governing boards, as they can make an important contribution with respect to the vision, strategy and ethos of the school, as well as ensure accountability with respect to the overall management, including financial accountability;
- Encourage school leaders to engage with their local community and to establish close links with parents, business, other schools and social partners;
- Facilitate the continuous professional development of school leaders in order to support them to be able to adapt and respond effectively to changing local conditions;
- Promote networking between school leaders, for example through peer learning activities at school level and at local and regional level;
- Promote gender balance in educational leadership and increase the number of female school leaders;

- Invite school leaders to inspire their colleague teachers and students to 'learn to learn" and to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and support.

Conclusion: → DIALOGUE

EFEE and ETUCE reaffirm that open learning environments require the leaders of educational institutions to play an active role by providing a strategic vision providing for European schools to provide for a professional working environment for our teachers and professors and an interesting learning community for our pupils and students.

Our joint work on "Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient school leadership" contributed towards the empowerment of school leaders, and towards the awareness of employers' organisations and trade unions on our own role to play in enhancing the effective and accountable autonomy of education institutions and school leaders.

During our Peer Learning Visits, by exchanging of best practices and experiences, it became clear that the DIALOGUE between and among teachers and school leaders, between trade unions and employers, between schools and their direct community is of outmost importance in guaranteeing good school leadership, in enhancing mutual trust and good-will and in striving for education quality.
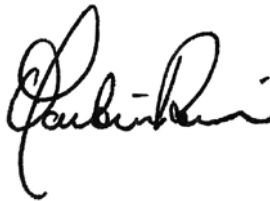The European Social Partners in education therefore commit themselves to actively promote the social dialogue and this declaration at national, regional or local level, respecting national education structures.

We would like to encourage national social partners to continue to work on the **school leadership theme** by making full use of the Strategic Partnership actions of the ERASMUS + Programme offered by the European Commission and by their active involvement in the European Policy Network on School Leadership (http://www.schoolleadership.eu)

This declaration has been adopted by the ESSDE Steering Committee on 19 January 2015.

For EFEE

For ETUCE

Bianka Stege
General Secretary

Martin Rømer
European Director

The original text is in English.

Credits

Strong and effective leadership is a key force for educational changes necessary for a modern European education system that is able to face social and economic challenges like growth, competitiveness and social cohesion. School leaders are an important stakeholder group for both the education employers' organisations and teacher trade unions.

In 2013 and 2014, the Secondary Education Council of the Netherlands (VO-raad), the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) worked on a joint project titled Professional Autonomy, Accountability and Efficient Leadership – and the role of employers' organisations, trade unions and school leaders. Our project focused on stimulating the effectiveness of school leaders in realising educational quality by means of improved industrial relations and improved employment relations.

Our joint work on "Professional autonomy, accountability and efficient school leadership":
· Raised awareness of employers' organisations and trade unions. Including our role in enhancing the effectiveness and accountable autonomy of education institutions and school leaders.
· Contributed to the empowerment of school leaders, schools governors, and governing bodies by providing information and exchange of views on the necessary leadership skills for schools in the 21st century.
· Provided input to the European Policy Network on School Leadership of which both EFEE and ETUCE are members.