

# Chapter 3

## Different Systems, Different Identities: The Work of Inspectors in Sweden and England

Jacqueline Baxter  and Agneta Hult

**Abstract** School inspection has formed part of both English and Swedish approaches to governing education for some time now. But latterly due to the neo liberal drive for educational excellence, both countries have remodelled their inspector workforce. Using Jacobsson's theory of governance as a regulative, meditative and inquisitive activity, this chapter investigates the effects that these shifts have had on the operational work of inspectors. Drawing upon interview data with inspectors and head teachers from both systems combined with documentary analysis we examine how the remodelling of the workforce in both countries has impacted on the ways in which inspectors carry out their work. The chapter concludes that inspection operating within a neo liberal framework of regulation must constantly shift and evolve in order to remain credible. It also points out that these shifts in themselves create tensions around the role and operational work of inspectors in both countries.

**Keywords** Inspection · Policy implementation · Schools · Education policy · Neoliberalism

### Introduction

School inspection has formed part of both English and Swedish approaches to governing education for some time now, forming a central tenet within the governing projects of both countries (Maclure 2000; Segerholm 2009). But as a result of political imperatives emerging as a result of international comparisons such as

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PISA (The Programme of International Student Assessment) (see for example Bieber and Martens 2011), in combination with a neo-liberal agenda which places a increasing emphasis on regulation of education (Power 1997), both inspectorates have made recent changes to their mode of inspections, one of which has involved the re-modelling of the inspection workforce.

In Sweden, the inception of a new inspectorate aligned more closely to The 2008 Education Act and other steering documents in 2008 marked a new period for educational inspection (Rönnerberg 2012; Hult and Segerholm 2014). A period during which government focus on inspection intensified, becoming central to its policies of economic regeneration. As a result of this its inspection process was transformed from its former far softer and advisory approach, to a far more punitive regime involving strict penalties for failure to comply. The new regime has, in common with the new regulatory framework in England, engendered a re-modelling of the inspector workforce with a move away from the recruitment of those with a background in education to the recruitment of individuals from the fields of law or academic investigation.

In England the inception of the Coalition administration in 2010 continued the drive that began under the previous New Labour administration. Designed to promote an education system based on neoliberal ideals, the new system has resulted in far greater numbers of free schools and academies (schools independent from Local authority and district financial and curricular control). A trait which has intensified under the Conservative administration which came to power in 2015 (Baxter 2016). In common with other areas of the public service undergoing similar disaggregation; new levels of school autonomy have demanded new systems of inspection and inspection frameworks that are able to monitor and control newly autonomous institutions, whilst also retaining credibility with government and public. The new inspection regime must combine regulatory rigour with perceptible links between it and school improvement. This relationship is far from proven in spite of a great deal of research in this area (see for example: Ehren and Visscher 2008; MacBeath 2006).

The inception of such a framework early in 2012 (Ofsted 2012a, b), was aimed at the creation of an inspectorate that was, ‘Much closer to the ground and much nearer to schools.’ (Parliament 2013a, b: Q66) and one aimed at promoting school improvement through a more concerted focus on school improvement. This change in framework was combined with a drive to re-model the inspectorate workforce in aiming to recruit in-service school leaders as part time inspectors (see for further discussion, Baxter and Clarke 2013).

Both countries in attempting to raise standards and in response to pressures—both national and international—have made substantial changes to the ways that they inspect. At face value these changes appear to pull in entirely different directions; in England they are characterised by a move by the inspectorate to effect more developmental work, with an emphasis on inspector professional teaching knowledge, in Sweden, the inspectorate appears to be moving away from any possibility of inspector capture, or too close a relationship between inspected and inspectors. This chapter explores what appears to be paradoxical shifts on the part

of both countries in order to explore the different pressures that these policies have had on front line practices of inspectors.

The inception of new systems and ways of working can be imagined to have effected considerable impact on the daily work of inspectors. In order to conceptualise this impact and evaluate the work of both Swedish and English inspectorates we draw Jacobsson's framework of governing; the rationale for so doing is discussed in the following sections of the chapter.

## Inspection in Neo Liberal Times

Education and school inspection are unavoidably situated in the constant tension between competing logics-sometimes summarised as those of the market and those of democratic politics...the classical liberal dream of a totally unregulated market was-and in this resurgent, neo-liberal re-formation continues to be based on the belief that people's needs and demands will be satisfied through individual choices of the products and services offered by private companies in competition with each other. (Ozga and Segerholm 2014, p. 44)

As John Clarke reports, the forms and registers of neoliberalism can be applied to numerous, 'Sites, situations, practices and processes.' (Clarke 2008a, p. 144), and suggests that the term has been applied so indiscriminately that it is no longer fit for purpose as an analytical tool. Nevertheless, it is useful to describe the ideological wave that has engulfed education systems such as England and Sweden and which has become,

Synonymous with the market-oriented philosophy of the, "Washington consensus" agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a usually pejorative signifier for a distinctly American form of "free-market". (Peck 2010, p. 1)

The economic crisis in Europe, beginning in 2008 reinforced the need for countries to find, '*the right levers*' (Ozga and Segerholm 2014), to increase economic productivity. Education is central to this and as a result has been placed under increasingly rigorous monitoring, regulatory and evaluation systems. The move to remodel the workforce in both cases is conceptualised in this chapter as part of the neo-liberal drive to drive up education standards in order to promote economic performance. Both the Swedish Inspectorate (SSI) and Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children Schools and families), in common with other European Inspectorates operate as key elements in the governing of education, acting not only as a regulatory body but also as a key element within the 'assemblages of apparatuses, processes and practices 'that constitute new forms of governance' (Newman and Clarke 2009, p. 33). In this respect the inspectorates acts not solely as an inspection regime but also as the producer and distributor of discourses that influence the way in which standards in English education are understood and conceptualised (see for further discussion Baxter 2013; Baxter and Clarke 2013).

In England the incremental marketisation of public services which began in the 1980s (see Ozga 2009), has gained pace since the creation of the Coalition Government in 2010. Increasing numbers of schools have opted for financial and curricular autonomy by achieving academy status (Parliament 2010; Ball and Junemann 2012). But in common with other public service organisations, increasing autonomy has concomitantly been accompanied by increasing regulatory control. This paradoxical situation is well articulated by Clarke who identifies it as one of four ‘performance paradoxes’ that emerge as regulatory bodies strive to represent the public interest in increasingly complex and dispersed systems of public provision (Clarke 2008b, p. 125). In his analysis, it is what he terms to be ‘the paradox of independence’ that is particularly relevant in order to secure both the authority and credibility of evaluative agencies such as inspectorates.

One of the critical dimensions of successful public service regulation is the need for regulatory agencies to be independent, not open to influence by the agendas of stakeholders, government or service users. This idea gained currency during what Power terms ‘the audit explosion of the early 80s’ (Power 1997, p. 3) and became established as one of the core elements of evaluating with validity (House 1980). One of the most important elements of a successful inspectorate is the credibility of its inspectors (see for example Boyne et al. 2002), but maintaining credulity alongside impartiality is a difficult balance to achieve. Inspectors are expected to have an in depth knowledge of their field, whilst equally being able to maintain some sort of distance between they and the profession being inspected (see Baxter 2013).

This chapter uses Jacobsson’s theory of governance to examine the work of inspectors as a regulative, meditative and inquisitive activity and investigates how changes in the inspector workforce have been perceived by both the inspectors themselves and head teachers in both countries (Jacobsson 2006, 2009).

### ***Governing by Inspection***

Jacobsson’s theory was chosen to frame this particular study due to its specificity in determining the ways in which inspection is used as a governing tool. Research into educational evaluation and accountability is centered largely upon the role and efficacy of inspection, rather than the role and efficacy of the inspector. Evaluation of theoretical lenses used to frame these investigations are useful in order to appreciate the impact of inspection to effect school improvement but offer little in terms of policy implementation frameworks (see for example Ehren and Visscher 2008; Sammons 2006, 2007). As this study essentially focuses on policy implementation in relation to educational governance Jacobsson’s model was thought to be most useful in encompassing the governance element at policy level, whilst also being flexible enough to examine this in terms of implementation; an important element not present in many studies of policy and its implementation (see for further information: Hill and Ham 1997; Matthews and Smith 1995; Spillane et al. 2002).

We feel that it is a useful lens to examine perceptions of credibility as his model breaks down governing activity into three principal types of governing activity. Relating them to the work of inspectors enables this study to see the extent to which head teacher and inspector perceptions of the role conflate with the requirements of each activity or the converse.

The first area identified within the model focuses on **regulative activities**: the extent to which inspection activities rely upon formal laws and directives with penalties for their violation. The second set of activities, termed **inquisitive activities**; concentrates upon making those who are to be inspected ‘show and tell’, to open up for control—for example, inspectors access into schools’ inner life—observing classes and interviewing school leaders, teachers, students and governors in order to find out what is really happening in schools. This overlaps with the third genre of activity: the **meditative activity** which centres upon discussion, professional dialogue and negotiations around what constitutes best practice in that particular context. Taking these three forms of governing activity this chapter investigates:

- **How the remodelling of the inspection workforce in both countries has impacted on inspector work?**
- **What are the implications of current perceptions of inspectors work for the legitimacy of inspectorates in England and Sweden?**

The research draws upon data gained through semi structured qualitative interviews with inspectors, inspector trainers, school leaders, and heads of inspection services in both Sweden and England (60 in all). Using an ideographic case study approach the research uses discourse analytic techniques to draw out elements relating to inspector identities and the challenges facing them within each system—this is explained at greater length in the methodological section of the chapter.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the changes made by inspectorates in order to enhance both legitimacy and credibility of the inspection process are perceived by inspectors and head teachers and what this may imply for inspection in both countries.

### ***A Tale of Two Inspectorates: Differing Inspectorates, Differing Policy Contexts***

This section of the chapter offers a brief background and flavour of context in which both inspectorates are located. This is in order to give a sense of the rapid changes that they have undergone in recent years, and to highlight the ways in which they are currently placed in the educational, cultural political contexts in which they operate.

## Sweden

As discussed earlier the neo-liberal agenda that gained pace in England during the 1980s also affected Sweden but failed to gain substantial ground until the period following the economic crisis of the 1990s. School inspection in Sweden was reintroduced in 2003, ‘following a period of soft evaluation in the form of,

Development dialogues’ and self-evaluation. At that time inspection was carried out by The National Agency of Education (NAE) (Lindgren 2015, p. 58).

This more developmental approach to inspection was blamed for what the Swedish government saw to be failing standards—a term characteristic of the neo-liberal drive for excellence and drawn from increasingly corporate approach to schools (Peters and Waterman 1982).

Since the inception of the new inspection agency, The SSI (Swedish Schools Inspectorate), in 2008, both the model and the scale and nature of the work of inspection have undergone substantial change and have been influenced by more stringent regulatory regimes in other countries for example England (Rönnerberg et al. 2012). The current model is based on, ‘control, results and formal or judicial aspects of education,’ (Lindgren 2012, p. 5), and was launched as part of an,

Ambitious attempt by the right wing coalition to reform the Swedish Education system which had been and is still described as inefficient and underachieving, (ibid, p. 6).

These changes also heralded the beginning of a far more systematic approach to inspection in which schools would be inspected with increasing regularity:

In 2011 the Inspectorate assessed 2400 comprehensive schools, 550 secondary schools and 660 other publicly funded educational enterprises. In their annual report to the government they stress the increase in productivity of around 1000 visits compared to the previous year, (or a 41% increase in productivity, our calculation) (Skolinspektionen n.d., p. 8 in Hult and Segerholm 2012, p. 2)

The shift from the NAE inspection more aimed at developing deficiencies at schools to the new inspectorate represented a shift to an inspection more firmly based on legal compliance. Earlier reports and decisions could, from an educational/pedagogical perspective point to areas that could be improved, but:

[t]he new and current way to write the reports and decisions is explicitly based on pointing out failures to comply with the Education Act and Ordinance and other statutes, and references to the particular legal paragraphs are always present. (Hult and Segerholm 2014, p. 5)

This change in policy engendered a re-modelling of the inspection workforce. This was partly due to accusations that inspectors emanating from the teaching profession had grown ‘too cosy’ with those they were tasked to inspect (Segerholm 2012). This according to Boyne and colleagues (Boyne 2006, p. 122), is the phenomenon of ‘inspector capture,’ and recognised within the field of public service inspection as a serious problem in terms of the public credibility and recognition of legitimacy of an inspectorate.

As a result of this the agency decreed that inspectors who were formerly recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of former teachers and head teachers should now also emanate from the field of law and investigation: that they should be legal scholars schooled in the ways of the law or professionally trained investigative researchers with an academic degree. The goal was one third of each background, teacher, field of law and investigative. This, it was hoped would put paid to accusations of partiality that had been levelled at ex teaching professionals.

The Inspectorate has a considerable mandate and is formally commissioned by the government to:

- (a) Carry out regular supervision of all schools and principal organizers (municipalities and operators of independent schools).
- (b) Perform regular quality audits where a sample of schools are audited thematically, e.g. one school subject, or a particular area of interest, for example assessment in the lower attainment.
- (c) Act on complaints from individuals (e.g. concerning bullying).
- (d) Authorise licences for independent schools.

All activities are based upon the agency's interpretation of the Education Act and Ordinance (2010:800), and a range of other national formal documents which mandate compliance. The quality audits, carried out at regular intervals also include analysis of educational research and longitudinal studies of practice.

The new system, characterised by laws, regulations and penalties for non-compliance is far more punitive than its former iteration (Skolinspektionen n.d.). Current inspections, in common with England, are high stakes- schools who fail to comply with a follow up development from July 2011 have been subject to a number of penalties (Education Act 2010:800). These have ranged from the imposition fines or for independent schools, in the worst case scenario, a withdrawal of school operating licences.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate may make use of penalties and apply pressure so that a principal organizer rectifies its activities. If the principal organizer does not take action or seriously disregards its obligations, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate may decide to impose a conditional fine or measures at the principal organizer's expense. In the case of an independent school, its license to operate may be revoked. (<http://www.skolinspektionen.se/>, 2013)

A primary focus for the new agency has been replacing many of those with an education background that worked as inspectors during earlier period when the inspections were part of the National Agency for Education 2003–2008 (Hult and Segerholm 2014). This aimed to counter accusations of inspector capture, whilst also ensuring that the new inspectorate was not hampered in its efforts by those educationalists who felt that the new inspectorate had little to offer in educational terms. Another motive for the legally trained inspectors was the Inspectorate's possibility to put injunctions that might have to hold in court.

## England

Although the English inspectorate Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) has been in existence far longer than its Swedish counterpart it has, since its inception in 1992 undergone many iterations (Maclure 2000). Formed at a time when public and political confidence in the English Education system was low and the right wing neo liberal agenda which had begun over a decade earlier and gained pace under Prime Ministers James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher, was cemented by John Major, who echoed earlier speeches by both premiers that, 'the state must step into schools,' (Chitty 2004, p. 43). Ofsted was designed to both regulate education and ensure that progressive left wing methods of teaching popularised during the 60s were not permitted to 'compromise standards,' as well as opening up the secret garden of education by informing parental choice of schools via, '*impartial advice and information*', offered by means of inspection reports (Ozga et al. 2013). The new agency required a new breed of inspector: one very far removed from those employed by the previous agency: Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI): inspectors that were expected to leave behind the more advisory relationship enjoyed by their predecessors in which:

'Regular inspection visits formed the basis of their professional expertise, their knowledge of schools, their understanding of the tasks teachers were confronting, their experience of good practice in different circumstances, their ability to report on what they saw without imposing their own or someone else's orthodoxy. This is what HMI stood for in schools.' (Maclure 2000: 322) and employ far more regulatory approach which subsequently came to be characterised (and caricatured), as punitive and rather than developmental.

Since then the education landscape has altered a great deal. The 1988 Education Reform Act formalised the expansion of marketised forms of education (Parliament 1988), this was followed by a number of Acts all designed to offer schools so called freedom from Local Authority control, and greater autonomy over curriculum and teacher employment (Parliament 2010). But these changes have also placed increasing political pressure on Ofsted to drive school improvement. This has been compounded by a number of influential international reports such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), which have shown English education to be under-performing compared to its European counterparts (Grek et al. 2009; OECD 2010).

These pressures have called Ofsted's role into question and resulted in a number of parliamentary inquiries into the role and purpose of Ofsted, and asking why, after so many years of inspection, England still appears to trail its OECD counterparts in number of ways (Parliament 2004, 2011). These inquiries, combined with an increasingly negative media focus on the inspectorate, resulted in recommendations that Ofsted should take a far greater role in supporting schools to improve. In order to do this it would also have to make considerable efforts to re-build its relationship with the teaching profession: a relationship which had moved from bare tolerance to outright aggression, culminating in 2013 with the National Association of Head Teachers formation of an alternative inspectorate (INSTEAD) at their annual conference in 2013 (Elmes 2013; Marquand 2013; Paton 2013).



In order to effect these changes and to answer to its critics Ofsted introduced a New Inspection Framework in January 2012, refining it in autumn of the same year (Ofsted 2012d, e). The new Framework and its accompanying handbook reduced the number of judgements from the previous twenty nine to just four. Not only did the new framework make the role of school improvement a core element of the inspection process, but also heightened the emphasis on inspector professional judgement, doing away with the tick box approach with its 29 criteria that had been subject to sustained criticism in the previous version (for further discussion see Baxter and Clarke 2013; Burchill 1995; Maw 1995).

As in the case of the SSI, These innovations were accompanied by efforts to re-model the inspector workforce: a workforce that had been accused by profession, press and Parliament of being out of touch with current issues in education. In order to counter these accusations Inspection providers, in the form of three agencies; CfBT, Tribal and Serco (Ofsted 2009c), were given a Key performance indicator of recruiting in-service school leaders as part time inspectors. This, it was hoped would enable to more readily effect school improvement by their ability to *speak the same language* as those being inspected whilst the fact that they are practising school leaders from good or outstanding schools would concomitantly enhance the credibility of their judgements.

As a result of these changes which in the process of,

Reflecting the neo-liberal faith in information as enabling competition and choice, while neo-liberalism's adherence to the principle of diversity in provision (so that choice and competition can operate) produces an increasingly varied set of activities and institutional arrangements which require-coordination, (Ozga and Segerholm 2014, p. 14).

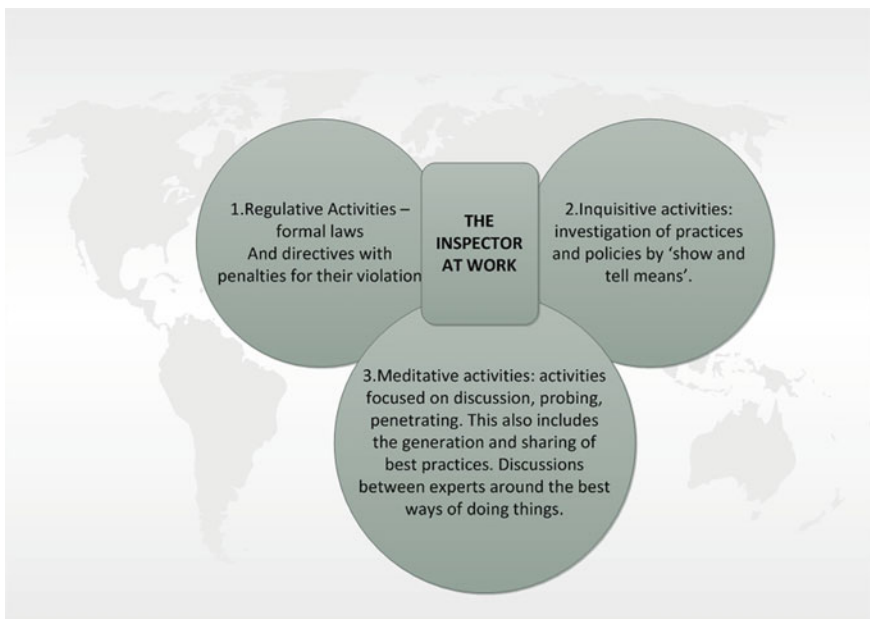
Inspection as both a driver for school improvement, a governing tool and a key element of the neo-liberal project has, as we have discussed affected both countries to varying degrees. The changes and adaptations that have occurred as a result of these pressures have created tensions within the inspection processes. Often these tensions have arisen due to attempts to mitigate against issues that arose as a result of the previous inspection regime. In the case of England, the need to more closely link school improvement to inspection has resulted in considerable re-evaluation of both the inspection framework and the inspection workforce. In Sweden, responses to similar pressures have been interpreted in very different ways. In the next section of this chapter we consider how those changes can be explored in light of the work carried out by inspectors.

## Theoretical Approach

Public sector inspection involves a number of elements which are described as fundamental to a successful inspection (see Boyne 2006), in order to render it both effective and credible. In the case of this research we understand effective inspection as a tool by which to govern education (Ozga et al. 2013). But the

process of inspection is a complex one leading in many cases to the type of ‘performance paradoxes’ outlined by Clarke (2008a, b) and described in the case of educational inspection in earlier work (Brimblecombe et al. 1995; Baxter 2013a). These paradoxes emerge as regulatory bodies that strive to represent the public interest in an increasingly complex system (Clarke 2008a, b, p. 125). One such paradox he refers to as, ‘the paradox of independence’, is indicative of the extent to which the regulatory body can be said to be impartial, as Ofsted describes it, ‘to inspect without fear or favor.’ (Ofsted 2012d). Clarke argues that in striving to fulfill their regulatory function whilst concomitantly retaining credibility in an constantly changing environment (and often in the face of considerable criticism by press and public), inspectorates inadvertently produce paradoxical inspection effects; these effects often creating new problems in terms of their legitimacy and credibility, not to mention the stressful effects it has on school staff (see for further discussion Baxter 2013b; Clapham 2014).

A body of research into school inspection agrees that inspectorates are to a great extent judged by public, profession and government in terms of the quality and credibility of their inspectors (Ferguson et al. 2000; Perryman 2007), and that this is particularly so within regimes that emphasise the relationship between inspection and school improvement (Matthews and Sammons 2004; Sammons 1999). In order to investigate the work of the inspector we draw on the work of Bengt Jacobsson who, in his work on global trends of state transformation describes three dimensions of governance activities (Jacobsson 2006); these are illustrated in Fig. 3.1.



**Fig. 3.1** Activities of inspection adapted from Jacobsson (2006)

Research into inspection and the qualities of inspectors (Baxter 2013b; Hult and Segerholm 2012; Segerholm 2011) has shown that training falls into two principal categories: induction training and ongoing continual professional development. The induction phase focuses primarily upon inspection values and addressing preconceptions that may be possessed by the nascent inspector. The challenges inherent within the initial training period are then carried forward into the next stage of inspector development: the continuous professional development in which the inspector learns ‘on the job’, and develops in experience and knowledge moving from a peripheral role in terms of their experience (see Lave 2009) to one in which they may be considered to have ‘expert inspector status’. In this chapter we understand this learning to take place within the constructivist premise in which inspectors learn as much from one another as from their trainers; that they bring knowledge to the process as well as learning from it and that their professional standing as inspectors is one in which their professional identity is negotiated in relation to the relationship and standing they acquire with their inspectees (Dewey 1916; Piaget 1954). We employ this understanding of inspector development to investigate the ways in which inspector development, preparation and work is affecting the inspection process under the new systems in both countries, and consider the challenges, tensions and opportunities inherent within the processes.

## Data Collection and Analysis: Methodology

This chapter is part of the project: Governing by Inspection- School Inspection and Education Governance in Sweden, Scotland and England (res-2009-5770).<sup>1</sup> The research project on which this chapter is based examines inspection as a means of governing education and investigates the governing work that inspection regimes do in three national education systems: Sweden, England and Scotland. The project investigates tensions between increased regulation through technical means such as performance data and the rules followed by inspectors in their school assessments, and their expert knowledge, professional judgement and use of support, development and persuasion in encouraging self-regulation in the teaching profession.

Within this chapter we draw from transcripts from sixty qualitative semi-structured interviews from both the English and Swedish case studies. Each interview lasting between 45 min and an hour, were analysed using key themes arising from the analytic framework for this research (Fig. 3.2). The key themes

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employed emerged by translating Jacobsson's classification of governance activities into inspector's work and include: laws, regulation, penalization, practices, teacher observation, interviews, feedback, policies, action planning, discussion, professional dialogue.

In order to ensure anonymity individual positions of inspectors and location of head teacher respondents is not included in this chapter. Throughout the research the data was held on secure servers within both countries and protected with encryption logins.

Analysis was then further broken down according to each genre of inspection activity and is outlined in diagrammatic form in Fig. 3.2.

The discourse was analysed using conversation analysis techniques employed by Harvey Sacks (Silverman 1998). Sacks' work has been found to be useful in examining perceptions and the normative assumptions which underlie these perceptions (Wodack and Kryżanowski 2008). It was chosen above other methods in order to evaluate how head teachers and inspectors position themselves in relation to the work of inspection. This type of analysis also involves a phenomenological approach to data in which the focus of the study is confined to the experiences of individuals (for further discussion see Husserl and Gibson 1962). This approach is not without its critics (see Willig 2001), who often see the interpretative role of the researcher in negative terms. Nonetheless it is valuable in establishing what frames of understanding are being employed by individuals as they go about their work. Perceptions of inspection and the processes by which inspectors make their judgements are key to the legitimacy and credibility of any inspectorate and in exploring the work of inspectors—particularly at a time of such great change in both countries, is an important element in understanding the complex mechanisms that operate at a number of levels within the inspection process.

The themes developed in Fig. 3.2 emerged as a result of the coding process, the segmentation of activities was undertaken in relation to work carried out by inspectors. The researchers then evaluated to which of elements of Jacobsson's theory the themes were most strongly linked.

The frames of understanding in this study are linked to the work of Goffman (1974) in terms of the implications of statements to link to particular beliefs. This is not unlike Sacks' member categorisation analysis in which, 'common sense knowledge' is employed in order to make sense of situations (Silverman 1998, p. 75). In analysing the normative meanings attached to conversations it is possible to explore the implications of these frames for acceptance or rejection of the status quo. The technique is used both in media analysis and cultural studies to investigate identities and cultural norms which underpin particular discourses (Carey 2008; Franklin 1999). In this study activities carried out during inspection were categorised according to the ways in which the inspectors framed them during their discourse. For example, thoughts on professional dialogue were understood within inspector narratives, to link strongly with Jacobsson's activity three-meditative activities. This followed from analysis of metaphors and anecdotes that emerged from the interviews and that helped to clarify inspector understandings of the various activities they undertake during the course of their work. In locating these

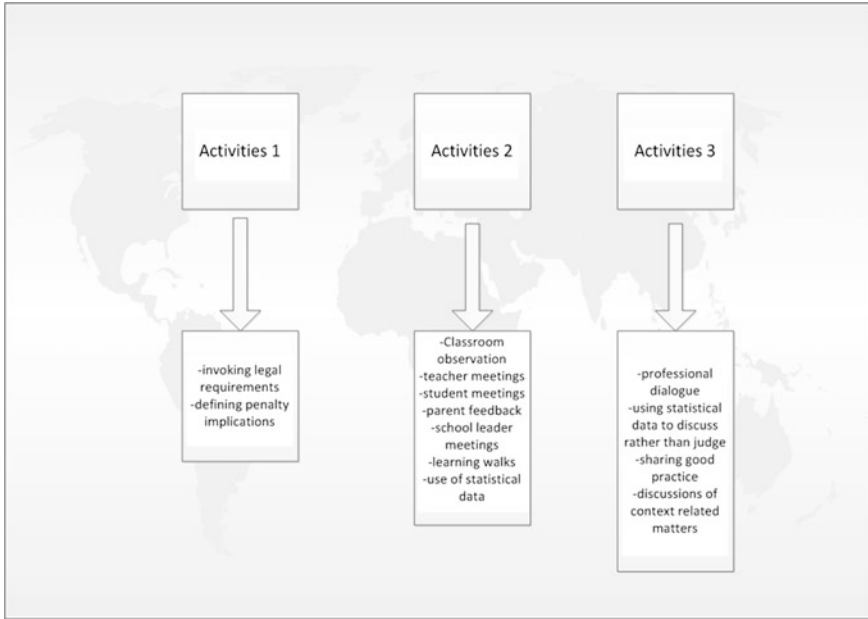


Fig. 3.2 Interview analytic coding framework

meanings within frames of understanding that are narrativised by metaphors, intertextual links (links to inspection documentation and aims), it was possible to then possible to categorise descriptions of these activities within the framework provided by Jacobsson. Goffman's frames of reference have been used successfully in other work on qualitative framing of narrative in relation to public and private discourses (see Goffman 1959, 1981, 2008, 2009).

## Findings

In this section of the chapter we discuss our findings in relation to the three areas of activity outlined in figure one: we begin by a discussion of the role of regulative activities within the two systems.

### *Regulative Activities*

Although the SSI system of inspection is heavily weighted around issues of compliance there is a small element of discretion to the inspection process. This is reflected in the three main competencies that the agency focuses upon in their

inspector training programme which involves elements of a juridical, pedagogical and investigative nature.

Although highly prescriptive, the process is dependent upon inspector knowledge and expertise and as this may vary from inspector to inspector, judgements may differ accordingly. The training programme takes place over six months and includes twelve centrally organised days of face to face input, accompanied by submission of written assignments that build into a portfolio of experience. To make sure that the departments have inspectors with the right competences, a competence tool has been developed by the inspectorate. This examines inspector abilities across 107 different competencies. The list was compiled according to the results of a number of qualitative interviews carried out across the different departments; the aim being to create a tool which accurately reflects the skills, knowledge and personal attributes required of jobbing inspectors. All inspectors are asked to self-report on each competency. This is then discussed with a full time department manager who will compare the self-evaluation with their own view of the inspector's fitness to practice. For the SSI the new system has a number of strengths as a Swedish Inspector Competence developer recounts:

You can look at the individual level, unit level, department level, authority level and relate it to the three different professional backgrounds. (Swedish Inspector Competence Developer 2012)

The new competency framework was also premised on the fact that a number of inspectors had moved from the previous regime (The National Agency for Education) and were found to be lacking in some of the skills needed for the new system as well as some of the newly employed. The need for training and different competences is understood by this inspector who frames it in terms of a belief that it will aid development of a robust and effective inspection system:

You have to be aware that you represent the state. You have to try to be impartial somehow. I suppose it's a good mix with both lawyers and teachers, but I think, since we look a lot to law obedience and less to quality in our supervision...It has been a discussion here [at the inspectorate], some teachers think that they alone can master, or they think that it [inspecting] requires teacher background, but I think that you also need the investigative background when looking at the present model. (Inspector with a law background)

This inspector frames the inspectorate's work in terms of the government and strongly identifies with an understanding of the role as an agent of government. Being this agent, it seems important that the inspectors are prepared with different competences and knowledge for their mission. As indicated in the quote, there has been a debate within the inspectorate in Sweden concerning which the valuable competences and perspectives are. However they all seemed to perceive themselves as agents of the government with a mission of controlling for and protecting individual children's right according to the Education Act. To the inspectors with a teacher background it also was important to interpret the law to protect pedagogical values since they identify to a far greater extent with the education professionals they are inspecting. In contrast to the Swedish inspectors English inspectors articulated their role constantly alluding to their separation and distance from government.

The present head of Ofsted-Sir Michael Wilshaw<sup>2</sup>—took up his role in January 2012. Unlike many previous Her Majesty’s Chief Inspectors, he was a practising head teacher before taking up the role. Because of this (alongside other factors), he was feted in the media as head of the highly successful Mossbourne Academy, a school in an area of high socioeconomic deprivation whose standards had been greatly enhanced by his work (Baxter 2013b). As one of the new innovations that took place in the inspectorate in the period following his appointment, it was decided that not only should inspection adopt an approach that was (at least superficially) far simpler but should also make a concerted attempt to frame its work in terms of the development of teaching and learning. In order to do this the agency reduced the number of judgements from twenty nine to just four whilst also placing a great deal more emphasis on the professional judgement of its inspectors. Inspectors recruited before 2012 were from very varied backgrounds—for example some were retired teaching professionals, others had held senior positions within local authority education departments. Few were practising teachers and many had been out of school for a considerable time. The innovation to recruit in service head teachers from outstanding schools was designed to provide enhanced inspector credibility with teachers and school leaders whilst also attempting to frame the inspector as a professional—highly skilled in the art of teaching and learning. The drawback of this was an increased risk of ‘inspector capture’ (referred to earlier), and an understanding of teaching and learning that emanated almost entirely from the context in which the head was placed (discussed more fully in previous work, see Baxter 2013a). A lead inspector describes the challenges of this change:

We do interviews and assessment and part of that interview and it’s quite a crucial part is to try and look at the nature of the person: we are looking for people who can apply the criteria fairly and err, leave behind their baggage. That is actual quite difficult; it’s one of the issues that we face above anything else; even throughout the training, we often encounter people that say, ‘that’s not the way I would do it’ and the emphasis is not only what they would do but what a school or other institution is doing and whether it works. (Lead inspector, England)

It is interesting that this inspector should frame what is essentially professional knowledge as ‘baggage’ particularly given the emphasis placed upon it in the current English system. This context related knowledge was criticised by a number of head teachers that were interviewed as part of this study. The reason for many of the criticisms was often due to the fact that those working in outstanding schools were very often placed in areas of low deprivation, yet were tasked with inspection of schools who were placed very differently in socio-economic terms. The perception among these heads was often that it was impossible for these inspector heads to appreciate the particular demands of working in challenging schools. This, to a certain extent, undermined the credibility of these outstanding heads.

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<sup>2</sup>At the time of publication a new Head of Ofsted—Amanda Spielman is due to take over from Sir Michael Wilshaw at the end of 2016. Spielman was instrumental in establishing the multi-academy schools chain, Ark.

The contrasting claims to credibility employed by inspectors from each system within these regulatory activities demonstrates the different frames of understanding employed by each *in terms of their role*: the Swedish inspector as an agent of government and the English inspector as knowledgeable teaching professional. These are explored further in terms of the inquisitive activities engendered through the role of inspector.

### *Inquisitive Activities*

The regulative activities of both the SSI and Ofsted are supported by evidence. To a large extent it is through these inquisitive activities (numbered two in figure one), that this evidence is brought into play.

The role of what constitutes knowledge and evidence in inspection has changed and evolved according to political and policy changes (Chitty 2004; Lindgren 2012; Ozga 2009). Lindgren points out how this plays out in the case of Sweden:

Judgements tend to be located within an on-going struggle between two parallel professional cultures: a pedagogical and a juridical. (Lindgren 2012: 1)

In England the tensions tend to be between the use of statistical and numerical data weighed against the extent to which qualitative, context specific data is used to inform judgements (Ozga et al. 2011). In both systems the inquisitive activities of the inspectors manifested by the ways in which they investigate practices, policies and data not only equip them with an evidence base upon which to work, but equally offer individual schools the opportunity to show their work in the best light. In the English system the current inspection framework was designed to eradicate (as far as possible), any opportunity for schools to ‘play the system’, as one head teacher outlined:

You know, you just know that the guy down the road has shipped all of the bad kids out to the seaside for the day. (Head teacher, England)

Shorter lead in times (schools only have one day’s notice), more teacher observation, inspections which only last two days and a system which places an emphasis upon teaching over time as opposed to the classroom *performance* of the teacher, all combine with the aim of making inspections: *shorter and sharper*. But the short sharp inspections are creating tensions of their own as one school leader told us:

They [Ofsted] come in and they see around 50 observations, but say my best staff work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and they come Thursday Friday? (Head teacher, England)

The shorter nature of inspection has brought challenges of its own to the process, raising questions about the scale and nature of the inquisitive process and the extent to which qualitative data is weighed against student attainment data. In some



cases this has led to increasing levels of cynicism amongst heads who feel that the present scale and nature of inspector duties render it impossible for them to go by anything other than statistical data based evidence:

Do you really get a feel for what a school is like over 2 days? ... I actually think that they [Ofsted] should have that first conversation with the SIP (School improvement Officer), [...] tell me about the leadership and management of the school, where do you see the grades over the next 3 years under this management? Then we will go and inspect it. Otherwise, stay in London and look at RAISEONLINE<sup>3</sup>. (Head teacher, England)

This perception does not seem to have contributed to positive perceptions of inspector competence particularly in view of the very short time that inspectors have in school, as one head teacher remarked,

When you see what they have to do in two days, it's a great deal. (Head teacher, England)

Recent changes to the inspection system in Sweden have also placed additional demands on their inspectors in terms of their inquisitive activities. In contrast to their English counterpart, Swedish inspectors do not inspect teaching. Instead their inquisitive activities centre upon checking individual schools compliance to the Education Act and other steering documents. Are they doing the right thing concerning development plans, documentation and data pertaining to student achievement? Some inspectors express some doubts about if these are the most important aspects to inspect:

[I]t is much easier to get stuck in questions about details, because they are easy to identify. But are these questions really the most important ones? The most important questions, those about the process—about how much [the school] works—are the difficult questions. And you don't touch upon them as much, because they are more difficult to judge. (Inspector quote in Lindgren 2015: 71)

Swedish school leaders complain about the time consuming nature of the task of collating the required levels of documentary evidence (Novak 2013), and they, like their English counterparts view the changes as specious; voicing concerns that the short time spent in school, combined to the quantity of written, statistical and legal compliance documentation means that many inspectors have judged a school before they even embark on the inspection visit:

The time they met students and teachers were really short [...] so I think it's a short time for them to really see. (Head teacher, Sweden)

The short timescales for inspection combined with the sheer quantity of evidence for analysis, places considerable pressure upon inspector's abilities to synthesise and analyse a range of evidence. In Sweden this has led to the recruitment of individuals with academic degrees in the art and science of investigation. In England the employment of in service head teachers has meant that this skill has

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<sup>3</sup>Data management system for school attainment and achievement data in English secondary and primary education.

had to be honed within the context of initial and on-going training. One inspector explained the challenges that this poses to lead inspectors in the English system:

It's a very, very difficult role; because you've got all of that responsibility at the start of inspection: to prepare; you've got to build a relationship with the head teacher and the senior team and I think that's a crucial part of a successful inspection: if they feel they've been listened to and you've gone to look at the stuff they suggested: lesson plans etc. One of the criticisms made [recently] about our evidence forms was that they weren't clinical enough, judgmental enough or explicit enough. (Inspector trainer and lead inspector, England)

Striking a balance between building a relationship with school leaders—listening to their story of their school and the evidence that they are keen to present yet remaining impartial and drawing on evidence that may well place them in a poor light—is a difficult one to achieve. It overlaps a great deal with the meditative activities outlined in section three of figure one, yet it is in essence quite a different activity. The tensions between the inquisitive practices and the meditative activities are elucidated by this English lead inspector and inspector trainer who talks about his own perceptions of the inspector role when working as a head but learning to be an inspector:

I used to drive away from the training [to be an inspector] thinking, you know any of my staff could do this, whether it is the most high flying senior teacher that you've got or the newly qualified teaching assistant with no experience. Cos surely it's a case of applying a set of criteria to a given situation? In my naivety I underestimated the interpersonal element and as I inspected more it came very vividly to me that actually it's 98% interpersonal. (Lead Headteacher Inspector, England)

The interpersonal element of inspection is intrinsically linked to both the meditative and regulative activities: a facet that is recognised and articulated within the new English system in which teaching inspectors are thought to add credibility to the process and, it is hoped, will encourage school leaders to more readily enter into professional dialogue with inspectors, and concomitantly be more ready to accept judgements (for further discussion see Baxter and Clarke 2013).

In the Swedish system not only the lack of a teaching background but the particular approach taken by those from a legal background has created problems which then overlap into the meditative activities of the inspectorate, as two Swedish school leaders told us:

We felt it [inspection] as a medieval inquisition more than as an inspection. (Head teacher, Sweden)

[They] could not think outside of the box: 'this is what the law says' [...] 'this is our directive'...so he was a real jobs worth. (Head teacher, Sweden)

It became clear from a number of head teacher accounts, that the very formal way in which inspectors from a legal background attempted to communicate with school staff seemed very alien. At times this not only impeded communication but appeared particularly inimical to the whole idea of accepting judgements from people with no educational background. Also some inspectors with educational

background meant that lacking this background and knowledge might cause judgements that are not equivalent (although schools are performing equal) due to these inspectors not knowing when and how to ask supplementary questions (Lindgren 2015: 70).

### *Meditative Activities*

The comments above demonstrate the perceptual problems engendered by having individuals without an educational background working as inspectors. The new English system in contrast with its drive to introduce a perceptual proximity between inspectors and inspectees, has done so at the risk of inspector capture, as discussed earlier; with its accompanying occluded discourse of partiality (Boyne 2006). The notion of professional inspectors who can effect positive change within schools has proven deeply seductive to the English inspectorate who, influenced by evidence given at a Parliamentary inquiry into the work of Ofsted in 2011 which commended the manner of inspections carried out in the independent inspectorate:

Within our system, the team inspectors are themselves current serving practitioners. We deploy around a thousand of these a year to go into and inspect other schools. The exchange of information and the opportunity to see the most effective practice and to take it back into their particular institutions is phenomenal. The inspectors themselves frequently comment that it is the best professional development that they get, as well as the benefit to the sector as a whole. (Parliament 2011)

Since then there has been some criticism of an alleged lack of rigour on the part of the independent inspectorate, with allegations appearing in the media which criticised the inspectorate for inspector capture (Paton 2014b).

But the type of meditative activities alluded to by Jacobsson—the generation and sharing of best practices and the idea of inspection as a discussion between professional experts—is popular with some head teachers as this individual reported,

It felt much more collaborative: like we were doing inspection with them rather than having it done to us. (Head teacher, England)

In the new inspection Framework the word professional appears 40% more frequently than in the previous 2009 version (Ofsted 2009a, b, 2012a, b) and the Handbook for Inspection and its accompanying Framework makes the link between inspection and school improvement much more specific than it has been in the past, stating that the agency aims to:

2. Provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament about the work of schools and the extent to which an acceptable standard of education is being provided. This provides assurance that minimum standards are being met provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability, as well as indicating where improvements are needed. (Ofsted 2012a)

The Swedish Inspectorate have since the new model 2008 tried to ‘recover’ some of the developmental view of inspection, but this is effected in a slightly different way to the new English system. In the Swedish regular supervision there are very few teaching observations and no individual feedback sessions with teachers, only with heads. However in the newly introduced feedback seminars, after the report is published the inspectors meet with the representatives for the municipality and the head teachers in order to effect a constructive dialogue which centres upon points for development and how to take these forward. This kind of meditative activity is highly appreciated by those attending, as this Chairman of the Municipal Board of Education reports:

When it comes to the feedback seminar I’m actually impressed, they [the inspectorate] have organised the process so that they both have written the reports and also helpfully arranged group work with school leaders to work through their reports. So far they have topped my expectations. (Chairman, Municipal Board of Education, Sweden)

Viewed in light of Jacobsson’s three areas of activity it is evident that whilst both systems use inquisitive activities to reach their judgements; whilst the English system appears to choose superficially meditative activities to govern; its Swedish counterpart relies very firmly on the regulative activities as outlined in area one (Fig. 3.1). Our final discussion explores these aspects in light of Jacobsson’s original theory and examines the challenges and tensions for the new inspection regimes in each country.

## Concluding Discussion

This chapter set out to examine how the remodelling of the inspection workforce in both countries has impacted on inspector credibility and the implications of current perceptions of inspector credibility for the legitimacy of inspectorates in England and Sweden. As the chapter has illustrated, these changes have been substantial—each designed to counteract public and political criticism and to enhance the credibility of the inspectorate. In theory, these changes look to be positive, but when they are viewed at an operational level, the data indicates that there are substantial challenges to be overcome.

Sweden’s employment of individuals who operate, ‘at arms-length’ from those they inspect (Clarke 2008a, b: 65), whilst minimising the risk of accusations of partiality, concomitantly creates a bureaucratic discourse which appears to run counter to many of the meditative activities that are fundamental to the inspection process. This in turn is failing to convince some teaching professionals that inspection is indeed a useful and developmental activity for their school (Hult and Segerholm 2012: 3; Segerholm and Hult 2013: 15). The Swedish inspection, since 2008 closely tied to the Education Act and the decisions based on deviations from law paragraphs, implicate that formal observations of teaching during inspection are not performed since the law says nothing about how to teach. However, this lack of

observation has recently provoked questions around how a school can possibly be judged on the basis of regulatory compliance alone. In addition to this, the personal skills of those from backgrounds other than teaching, are often blamed for a seeming lack of comprehension of the particular pressures that schools and teachers are under. Leading to a lack of faith in the credibility of inspectors and the inspectorate.

In contrast, the heightened focus on regulation via meditative activities described in the English system is creating different challenges for both inspected and inspectors. As the study has illustrated, decisions on what data to include and what data constitutes the most powerful evidence when faced with a choice of both externally generated and school generated data can cause tensions for inspectors. As well as in the Swedish case these decisions can also be problematic for schools, who often question why inspectors bother coming into school if their evaluations seem to be based largely on data made available to them prior to inspection. The reduction in criteria with its focus on the professional skills and judgements of inspectors, whilst welcomed by some, has also caused problems for some head teachers, who accuse in service inspectors of judging schools according to the standards and context in which they are placed. This appears to be particularly problematic in schools within areas of high socioeconomic deprivation which have been inspected by inspectors who have worked in more economically buoyant areas. This has been illustrated by the marked increase in the number of complaints made about the system since its inception in 2012—in the first five months of the new Framework 262 schools—one in 12 of those inspected made a formal complaint afterwards (Garner 2012a, b).

Since then the inspectorate has come under additional criticisms in terms of its proximity to government. Accusations that the inspectorate is merely carrying out party political agendas reached their apotheosis just before the Secretary of State for Education stood down after The Trojan Horse affair—a scandal in which a number of schools in Birmingham, England were investigated following allegations that certain individuals were imposing hard-line Muslim agendas on the curriculum (Baxter 2014a, b). These accusations led to David Cameron suggesting that the inspectorate be tasked with ensuring that schools were advocating strictly ‘British Values’ (Paton 2014), and signalling yet another duty for the inspectorate to embrace. In the wake of the affair the inspectorate’s (and inspectors) credibility has been seriously called into question when it was revealed that some of the schools involved had been judged outstanding only a year before the crisis broke.

As we have pointed out, the role of the inspector is key within the inspection process. The recent changes within the inspectorates of both countries, changes that have largely been provoked due to the neo liberal drive for excellence in education, whilst apparently responding to criticism, have in themselves caused considerable challenge for inspectors. These challenges are affecting the perceptions of inspector credibility and in the longer term will need to be addressed in order to assure the continued legitimacy of the inspectorates within both countries.

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