School Inspection and Self-Evaluation

Around the world school inspection is subject to critical scrutiny. It is too cumbersome? Too expensive? Too disruptive to the normal flow of school life? Does it actually improve schools? And, what does the new relationship between inspection and self-evaluation mean for schools?

School Inspection and Self-Evaluation: Working with the New Relationship addresses these issues, and unpicks the legacy of an Ofsted regime widely criticised as invasive and disempowering to teachers. In this book, John MacBeath:

- examines in turn each aspect of the 'New Relationship', its potential strengths and some of its inherent weaknesses;
- debates issues that confront school leaders and classroom teachers, including Every Child Matters;
- offers advice on how schools can marry ongoing self-evaluation with Ofsted's expectations;
- describes how to deal with PLACS, PANDAS' and other beastly inventions';
- shows how to use web sources to best advantage;
- explains how to reconcile the tensions between accountability and improvement;
- provides a guide to a repertoire of tried-and-tested approaches to help teachers embed self-evaluation in day-to-day classroom practice.

The book also contains case studies from schools that have adopted innovative approaches to self-evaluation.

While of immediate practical interest for school leaders, managers and teachers in England, the book also speaks to an international audience, as the issues raised here have resonance in every country where quality assurance and standards are at the forefront of policy and practice.

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School Inspection and Self-Evaluation

Working with the new relationship

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1 New relationships for old

'She who has a hammer sees only a world of mails.'

This opening chapter sets the scene for the New Relationship with Schools, (NRwS), examining the perceived need for a new relationship in light of what had gone before. Each of the seven elements of the NRwS jigsaw are examined in turn, arguing that schools need to view these with a critical and enlightened eye.

There is a new relationship between government and schools. It is an implicit recognition that the old relationship had been damaged by a decade of tensions and antagonism between agencies of government and schools. The legacy of the Thatcher regime, which cast teachers and 'progressive educators' as the enemy within, was little attenuated under a Labour government which did not want to be seen as soft on teachers. The retention of Ofsted and its Chief Inspector were a signal to teachers, but primarily to a wider public, that this administration too could be tough. After nearly a decade in power it became increasingly apparent that the old relationship was no longer sustainable and that it was time for a new approach.

The concept of a new relationship was first spelled out by the Government Minister, David Miliband in a high-profile policy speech on 8 January 2004.

> There are three key aspects to a new relationship with schools. An accountability framework, which puts a premium on ensuring effective and ongoing self-evaluation in every school combined with more focussed external inspection, linked closely to the improvement cycle of the school. A simplified school improvement process, where every school uses robust self evaluation to drive improvement, informed by a single annual conversation with a school improvement partner to debate and advise on targets, priorities and support. And improved information and data management between schools, government bodies and parents with information 'collected once, used many times'.

The New Relationship, elaborated in subsequent documents, promised to allow schools greater freedom, to free them to define clearer priorities for

themselves, get rid of bureaucratic clutter and build better links with parents. Advances in technology promised improved data collection and streamlined communication. A School Improvement Partner, described as a 'critical friend' would liaise with schools and support them in achieving greater autonomy, releasing local initiative and energy. The seven elements of the new relationship were portrayed as an interlocking set, framed by trust, support, networking and challenge (Figure 1.1).

It is not hard to imagine hours spent in offices of government, redrafting and refining images and terminology to achieve the right register and to convey a genuine conviction that things could be different. While it is important to welcome the apparent goodwill and the government's desire to build bridges, it is important to understand the political and economic context in which that relationship is set. On the economic front its main driver is the imperative to reduce public spending. Drastic reduction in the Ofsted budget, spelt out in the Gershon Report[1] specified the need for 'light touch inspection', as much a concomitant of reduced funding as an argument for 'grown up' quality assurance. The political driver, closely allied to economic policy and New Labour's embrace of the internal market[2], required funding to be pushed down to front line services, accompanied by consumer choice and institutional accountability.

The good ideas inherent in the New Relationship, symbolised in the interlocking pieces in the jig saw need therefore to be examined with a critical and enlightened eye.

Elements of the New Relationship with schools

Self-evaluation

Prior to the election of New Labour in 1997 the Conservative government and its Chief Inspector of Schools rejected self-evaluation as a soft option which, it was claimed, had done nothing in its previous incarnations to raise standards. The 1997 election of a Labour government was a watershed for self-evaluation as, over the following years, it moved gradually but progressively towards centre stage. With the coming of a new Chief Inspector, David Bell, it was given a new status at the very heart of the new relationship. The key difference in this reborn self-evaluation was its liberation from an Ofsted pre-determined template, schools now being encouraged to use their own approaches to self-evaluation with the self-evaluation form (the SEF) serving simply as an internal summary and basis for external inspection. That at least, is the theory.

In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is.

In theory self-evaluation allows schools to speak for themselves, to determine what is important, what should be measured and how their story should be told. In theory self-evaluation is ongoing, embedded in the day-to-day work of classroom and school, formative in character, honest in its assessment of strengths and weakness, rigorous in its concern for evidence. The New

Networking and Collaboration
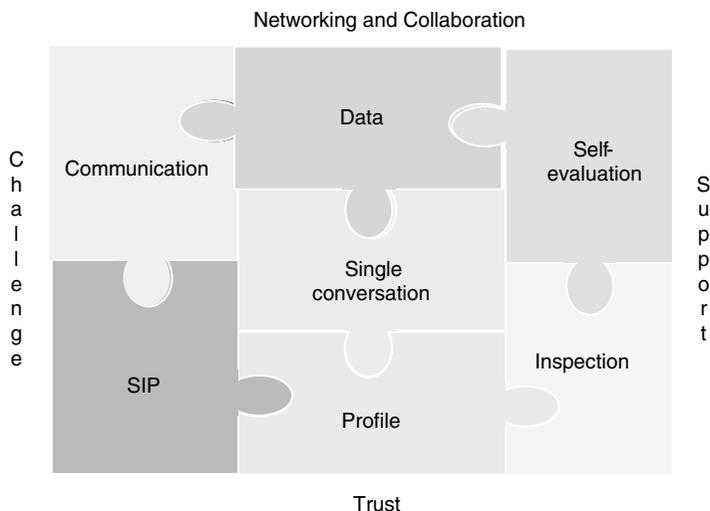
Figure 1.1 The seven elements of the new relationship.

Relationship explicitly accepts these tenets and advises schools to adopt and adapt their own approach.

In practice it is a different story. A recent study for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL)[3] asked schools to describe the framework or model currently used in their school. The predominant response was simply 'Ofsted', 'the SEF' or its predecessor the S4. Asked for reasons for their choice the following was fairly typical. 'We use Ofsted because we will be inspected and need to be prepared for that.'

While it was equally common for schools to say they used a combination of local authority guidelines and the Ofsted framework, the NCSL survey revealed that these are now closely matched to Ofsted protocols. Previous research by NFER[4] in 2001 surveying 16 schools in 9 LEAs reported that 10 were using a local authority model, 4 were using the Ofsted framework while others used a 'pick and mix' approach, in one case Ofsted, plus Investors in People plus *Schools Must Speak for Themselves.* Since then the convergence between local authority models and Ofsted has gown stronger and the earlier more creative models tend to have been marginalised.

However strong the disclaimer by HMCI that the Ofsted SEF is *not* self-evaluation it is clear that self-evaluation is seen by the large majority of schools as a top-down form of review closely aligned with the criteria and forms of reporting defined by the inspectorate. Faced with an array of consultant leaders, LA advisers, school improvement partners and governing bodies all urging conformity to the SEF, it is only a brave, and perhaps reckless, headteacher who would not play safe. The availability of on-line

completion of the SEF is a further impetus to see self-evaluation as forms to be filled and an event to be undertaken rather than a continuing process of reflection and renewal.

Inspection

The new inspection process takes the SEF as its starting point, so allowing a shorter and sharper process, given that schools have laid the groundwork and provided the Ofsted team with a comprehensive, rounded and succinct picture of their quality and effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses, allegedly warts and all. The main features of the new inspections are described in NRwS in the following terms:

- shorter, sharper inspections that take no more than two days in a school and concentrate on closer interaction with senior managers in the school, taking self-evaluation evidence as the starting point;
- shorter notice of inspections to avoid schools carrying out unnecessary pre-inspection preparation and to reduce the levels of stress often associated with an inspection. Shorter notice should help inspectors to see schools as they really are;
- smaller inspection teams with a greater number of inspections led by one of HMI. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will publish and be responsible for all reports;
- more frequent inspections, with the maximum period between inspections reduced from six years to three years, though occurring more frequently for schools causing concern;
- more emphasis placed on the school's own self-evaluation evidence as the starting point for inspection and for schools' internal planning, and as the route to securing regular input and feedback from users – pupils, their parents and the community – in the school's development. Schools are strongly encouraged to update their self-evaluation form on an annual basis;
- a common set of characteristics to inspection in schools and colleges of education from early childhood to the age of 19;
- a simplification of the categorisation of schools causing concern, retaining the current approach to schools that need special measures but removing the categorisations of 'serious weakness' and 'inadequate sixth form', replacing them with a new single category of 'Improvement Notice'.

'Shorter', 'sharper', 'smaller' are key downsizing elements of the new inspection. 'Shorter' applies to less notice so that schools may be seen 'as they really are', while a short stay in the school is premised on the school having 'hard' evidence of its practice, not preparing for inspection but always prepared. While it may easily be assumed from this that the purpose of the new inspection is to validate the school's own self-evaluation, Ofsted is quick

to disabuse people of that notion. While self-evaluation is described as an integral element of the process, inspectors will continue to arrive at their own overall assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. They reserve their judgement on the capacity of the school to make improvements, *taking into account* its ability to assess accurately the quality of its own provision. 'Taking into account' is an important caveat as it signals clearly the nature of the relationship between the external and the internal team. There is no pretence that this is an equal partnership.

Every Child Matters

A key constituent of the new relationship takes account of the five outcomes for children and young people defined in the policy document *Every Child Matters*.[5] These are:

- staying healthy
- enjoying and achieving
- keeping safe
- contributing to the community
- social and economic well-being.

In judging leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of a school, inspectors examine the contribution made to all five outcomes. Claims made for validity and objectivity have, however, to be open to question given the breadth and ambition of the issues addressed. The highly subjective and sensitive nature of enjoyment, personal growth, parent and community links and equality belie any bold claims to objectivity and quantifiable 'outcomes'. While now deeply internalised in the linguistic canon of school improvement, outcomes in relation to these five areas of growth seems singularly inappropriate.

Undaunted by complexity and subtlety inspectors are required to quantify their judgements on the following four-point scale, while schools are enjoined to do likewise.

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good
Grade 3 Satisfactory
Grade 4 Inadequate

These rest on very broad and, to a large degree, impressionistic judgements. They are necessarily selective as to evidence that can be found and can be measured. It is open to question whether these labels enhance or diminish the nature of the judgements made. While their virtue is simplicity, their weakness is the gloss which undermines the nuance and complexity of what is being evaluated. As with summative assessment of pupils' work which

is more likely to inhibit than motivate,[6] these categorical judgements do not of themselves provide the formative criteria which might qualify as evaluation for learning. While much thought and agonising within Ofsted has gone into these four descriptors they remain contentious, in particular the 'satisfactory' category which may be read either as a half full, or virtually empty glass.

A rush to judgement?

Inspection is judgement not description. In the New Relationship it is judgement rendered within the parameters of a two-day visit, and while there is a strong case to be made for a shorter more focused visit (see David Bell's rationale in Chapter 3) NRwS has in fact widened the scope of inspection to include *Every Child Matters*, so while not relinquishing its traditional commitment to rating the quality of school provision, as well as the robustness of its self-evaluation, inspectors are required also to make summative judgements including the five broad and often intangible ECM outcomes (Table 1.1).

These are the foci of inspection in the new relationship.

Overall effectiveness, including training, integrated care and extended services.

Achievement and standards, targets, qualifications, and progress relative to prior attainment and potential, workplace skills and positive contribution to the community.

Quality of provision, rigour of assessment, planning and monitoring learners' progress, provision for, additional learning needs and involvement of parents and carers.

Programmes and activities, matched to learners' aspirations and potential, responsiveness to local circumstances and contribution of extended services to learners' enjoyment and achievement.

Guidance and support, safeguarding welfare, promoting personal development, guidance on courses and career progression and provision which contributes to pupils' capacity to stay safe and healthy.

Leadership and management, performance monitoring, high-quality care, equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination, links with other services, employers and other organisations and governors discharge of their responsibilities.

Provision causing concern

Inspectors must consider whether provision is failing to give learners an acceptable standard of education, in which case they must state this clearly in the report. There are two categories of schools causing concern:

- Schools which require special measures because they are failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and show insufficient capacity to improve.

Table 1.1 Some features of Ofsted's new approach to inspection

Previous inspection	NRwS inspection
6–10 weeks' notice before an inspection	Shortening the notice of an impending Ofsted visit. 2–5 days notice prior to inspection
Large inspection teams visiting for around a week	Small teams visiting for not more than 2 days
A maximum of 6-year interval between inspections	A maximum 3-year interval
Inspections cover: standards and quality of education; leadership/management; and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Inspection to cover standards and quality of education, leadership/-management; and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Self-evaluation not structured across all schools nor is it part of the inspection process	Self-evaluation as for all schools, the starting point of Ofsted inspection
Collection of a wealth of information – extensive use of lesson observation	Focus on core systems and key outcomes, informed by lesson observation and other indicators of pupils' progress
Detailed and lengthy (30 pages+) inspection reports produced.	Short, sharp reports (around 6 pages) focused on key outcomes with clearer recommendations for improvement
Reports produced within 40 days of the inspection event	Reports to be with the governing body, at least in draft, by the end of the week of the inspection
Schools required to prepare a separate post-inspection action plan	Schools feed their intended actions into the school development plan
Various categories of schools causing concern – special measures, serious weaknesses, underachieving and inadequate sixth forms	Rationalised system with two categories – special measures and improvement notice
Inspection usually conducted by registered inspectors	HMI leading many inspections and involved in all inspections

Source: Ofsted (2004) 'A new relationship with schools'.

- Schools which require significant improvement in one or more areas of activity, which should be served with an Improvement Notice.

A code of conduct

Inspectors work to a code of conduct[7] which stipulates that they uphold the highest professional standards in their work and ensure that school staff are treated fairly and that they benefit from inspection. They are required to evaluate objectively and have no connection with the school which could undermine their objectivity. They should report honestly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity; minimising stress and acting in the best interests of those they

inspect, engaging them in purposeful and productive dialogue. They should communicate judgements clearly and frankly, respecting the confidentiality of information and about individuals and their work. To this are added four demanding criteria:

- that the findings of the inspection are valid
- that findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- that the process of inspection promotes inclusion
- that inspection is carried out openly with those being inspected.

These are demanding principles and may, with shorter sharper inspections, be difficult to realise. It is, however, crucial for a school to be familiar with these principles as they offer a set of criteria which can be used by the school to evaluate inspectors and the process of inspection. The reciprocity of accountability in inspection's new clothes needs to be put to the test. Cast as friendly, collaborative and founded on a relationship of trust, schools, it is said, should feel safe enough to honestly disclose their weaknesses while inspectors listen sensitively to the school's own account. It is an ideal and idealistic scenario which appeals to the very best of collaborative quality assurance systems but nonetheless raises a number of prickly questions:

- How feasible is it for inspectors to render accurate and valid judgements across such a wide range of objectives?
- In what sense is the accountability agenda different under the NRwS?
- On what basis would schools be happy to be honest with Ofsted about their most serious weaknesses?
- To what degree is there a genuinely reciprocal relationship between a school staff and an inspection team?
- What is the nature of 'productive' dialogue?
- What does it mean for an inspection team to claim objectivity?
- What test may be applied to conform or contest inspectors' judgements as 'valid'?
- Is inspection under the new relationship any less 'high stakes' in its consequences than before?

The school improvement partner

For each of the schools that it maintains, the local authority appoints a school improvement partner from a pool of the people with current DfES (Department for Education and Skills) accreditation. The local authority is expected to consult with the school and to take account of objections for not accepting a particular individual but the final choice rests with the authority. The School Improvement Partner, in most cases should be someone with current or recent headship experience, is accountable to the authority which

carries responsibility for his or her performance, carrying out functions previously performed by the External Adviser.

The SIP, is the 'conduit' between central government, the local authority and the school. It is a telling descriptor. A conduit suggests a flow in a given direction, and to a degree this is true of the SIP's relationship with the school. The direction of communication flow is from the government to the LEA to the school improvement partner and thence to the school, instrumental in the service of mandated target setting and establishing priorities in line with government policies.

As a school's governing body is responsible for the strategic direction of the school, the SIP also offers them 'advice' on the overall direction of the school as well as on the headteacher's conduct of performance management. In their monitoring role SIPs are also required to advise the local authority if they believe a school is causing concern. The authority may then use its statutory powers to intervene, and may want the SIP to take the lead in instigating action. So the SIP, described in the documentation[8] as a 'critical friend', may also make a 'friendly' intervention to move the school towards special measures. His or her accountability is to the local authority, which in turn accounts to government through the DfES's National Strategies contractor who, in partnership with NCSL, is responsible for the assessment, training and accreditation of SIPs. The renewal or ending of the SIP's contract is down to the National Strategies Contractor who also holds the local authority accountable for the performance management of SIPs in their bailiwick.

The SIP also has a relationship with Ofsted inspectors. It is spelt out[9] as follows:

- They may be inspectors of schools but must not inspect in schools where they have a connection or where they are SIPs.
- Their reports on schools are made available to inspection teams.
- They must not seek to secure information about a forthcoming inspection nor divulge it to schools if they become aware of it.

The SIP clearly has a complex relationship with the school, with the local authority, with Ofsted and with the DfES. It not only demands of SIPs that they tread a very fine line among their various accountabilities but their remit also casts a shadow on their relationship with their adoptive headteacher, raising some essential questions about that relationship.

- Where does the power lie within and outside the head–SIP relationship?
- What, in these circumstances, does it mean for the SIP to be a 'critical friend'?
- What is the nature of the SIP's accountability to the school?
- How should the success of the SIP's performance be judged? By the school? By the local authority? By government agencies?

- On what basis would a SIP report the school as causing concern?
- What is the latitude for autonomous self-improving schools to dispense with the services of their SIP?

These and other questions are explored further in Chapter 12.

The single conversation

> A single conversation with a wise man is better than ten years of study.
>
> (Chinese Proverb)

The single conversation is the occasion for the SIP and the headteacher to discuss how the school is performing and for the SIP to ensure that key policy priorities are being addressed. The rationale for this is to reduce the multiple accountabilities and need for schools to report to a variety of agencies, a slimming diet widely welcomed by schools.

The agenda for the single conversation is laid down rather than negotiated, with a clear focus on attainment data, variations in pupil performance, monitoring and planning for pupil progress and evidence as to achievement of outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters*. The nature of the school's self-evaluation is also on the agenda, framed primarily in terms of measurement of pupil progress and interpretation of attainment data. Under five key headings the nature of the 'conversation' is made clear.

- How is the school performing?
- What are the key factors?
- What are the priorities and targets for improvement?
- How will the school achieve them?
- How are the school's performance management systems contributing to raising attainment and achievement?

While it is acknowledged that the single conversation will vary from school to school, it 'will', have a common core as detailed in the guidance documents.[10] The single conversation, in common with other aspects of the New Relationship deserves closer interrogation.

- What is the nature of the 'conversation'?
- What latitude does it offer for the headteacher to set or negotiate an agenda tuned to the school's current and future needs?
- What latitude does it offer for the SIP to be responsive to the school's current and future needs?
- What is the essential difference between an accountability conversation and an improvement conversation?
- Where, how often and for how long should that 'single' conversation take place?

School profile

The government intention for the school is to reflect the breadth and depth of what the school does, but contained in a short accessible document. It is a document designed for parents, as well as for a wider readership, including the DfES, and should contain the following information:

- data on students' attainment and progress, set against benchmarks for schools in similar contexts;
- how the school serves all its students, not just the average student;
- the most recent assessment by Ofsted, set against the school's own self-assessment;
- what the school offers, in terms of the broader curriculum;
- how the head and governors see the priorities for future improvement;
- what the school offers the rest of the system.

This 'short, focused report', it was foreseen,[11] would be pre-populated by the DfES, containing standardised comparative performance data about a school and its students, derived from information held on the National Pupil Database, coupled with information provided by the school on its own view of its priorities and performance. It was described in Ministerial terms[12] as follows:

> To supplement the data contained in performance tables, parents also have a right to a broader and deeper understanding of what the school is doing. We think the answer lies in an annual school profile which would replace the annual statutory report to parents and increase flexibility around the statutory elements of the school prospectus. It will be light on bureaucracy, easy to access and powerful in impact. It will place new and challenging information in the public domain.

The school profile was envisaged as another conversation piece – 'We want to see the profile become an important part of educational discussion in the home and the school, as well as in Whitehall'.[13] It stretches the imagination to envisage the nature of the fireside chat that might take place in the home or the nature of the conversation that might transpire in the corridors of power. The tenor of the above Ministerial speech is worth a conversation analysis of its own:

- In what way will the school profile lead to 'a deeper understanding' among parents?
- What 'flexibility' will it allow?
- In what ways will it be 'light in bureaucracy'?
- What is meant by 'powerful in impact'?

- What will make it appealing enough to provide a conversation piece for parents? And what is likely to be the focus of such conversation?
- What from your own experience might encourage a rich conversation with parents?

Data

Data is the sixth piece of the seven piece jigsaw. It is in some respects the most significant as official documents and pronouncements insistently emphasise that data is the alpha and omega of school life in the new century and in the New Relationship. Data is in the driving seat. It is the centrepiece in the single conversation, the overriding concern of the school improvement partner, the focus of inspection and the litmus test of the school's self-evaluation. The Ministerial speech[14] describes data as the most valuable currency in school improvement.

> Data helps teachers, heads of department and the senior leadership team identify underperformance, and do something about it. In this sense it is the most valuable currency in school improvement. When data makes it evident that the same pupils are thriving in History but struggling in Geography, decisions about performance management and professional development suddenly become much clearer.

'Data collected once but used many times' has achieved the status of a mantra. While left open to wide interpretation it appears to imply that the annual sweeping up of performance data and its reproduction in multiple disaggregated forms provides enough riches to last a school until the next sweep.

'Schools are infuriated when different bits of government make their own data collections and waste valuable time and effort at school level', acknowledges the Minister. He makes reference to complaints from heads and governors at having to 'wade through mounds of paper and points to progress made in the last few years in reducing demand by 50 per cent. Life is being made simpler by the development of one simple set of what the Minister describes as 'binding protocols'[15] to ensure 'the full benefits of the national pupil level data that is now available through PLASC....to make a reality of the statement "collect once, use many times."'

It should, the DfES suggests,[16] boast the following elements:

- data that helps teachers develop themselves;
- data that helps school leaders promote high performance;
- data that helps parents support their children's progress;
- data that helps LEAs target resources;
- data that helps the DfES fine-tune its interventions to spread good practice and of critical importance;

- the combination of qualitative as well as quantitative data that is the foundation for any intelligent conversation about public service improvement.

What form this helpful data assumes is not made explicit but refers primarily to the plethora of statistics on student attainment, aggregated and disaggregated in relation to a cluster of variables on home background, prior attainment, gender, and ethnicity. These are, in Ministerial parlance, a core data set which 'drive the data demands of the education system'.[17] The implicit is made somewhat more explicit however in this Ministerial rhetorical flight – 'and we will really achieve take off when there is a maximum use of data and benchmarks by all those with an interest in pupils' progress'. A number of critical questions follow:

- What does the term 'data' mean to school staff and what is the emotional resonance of that term?
- What kind of benchmarking does this imply?
- Who is data for? To what extent are they for consumers or critical users?
- What are the potential disadvantages of a single simplified data system?
- In what ways may data be used many times?
- If data are described in terms of 'binding protocols' what flexibility is there for schools to be autonomous, to be creative and to speak for themselves?

Communications

Communication, the seventh interlocking piece of the jigsaw, is the necessary precondition of any relationship. The New Relationship promises a 'stream-lined communications strategy'. It includes an on-line ordering service 'giving schools the freedom and choice to order what that they want, when they want'.[18] Documents and resources that would previously have been sent out, encumbering the headteacher's desk, and possibly waste bin, are now to be available on-line, easy to find and with detailed summaries of key policies. Schools are kept up-to-date with the latest additions to the on-line catalogue via a regular email notification – providing a direct web link to the latest information available online. Schools are able, therefore, to choose whether to download electronic versions or order paper-based copies of the information they need in the multiples required to be delivered to their school. Choosing to ignore them does not appear to be an option suggested. It is important to consider:

- What key elements would you want to see in a 'communications strategy'?
- What kind of documents are most, and least, helpful for school leadership?
- To what are teaching and other staff included in a communication strategy? And what is most, and least, helpful to them?

The four framing values

Easily overlooked in the NRwS jigsaw are the key words that frame the seven jig saw pieces. These words are *challenge* and *support, collaboration and networking* and *trust.* The implication is that a new relationship is founded on these and that it would be difficult to realise without these values being in place. But what do they mean?

The key word on which the others depend is trust. This could be interpreted in a number of different ways. For example:

- Teachers trust the goodwill of the government's intentions
- Teachers trust that Ofsted will be fair
- Teachers trust their own management to have their concerns and interests at heart
- The government trusts the professionalism and integrity of teachers
- Ofsted trusts the integrity and honesty of the school's own self-evaluation.

These are ambitious and probably unrealistic expectations because they imply some form of unconditional trust, whereas trust in an essentially politicised context is both conditional and calculative.[19] Trust, says Harvard's Richard Elmore[20] is a fragile commodity, hard to construct and easy to destroy. The very processes by which 'the connective tissue' of trust are created in schools are too easily reversible. At any point, for any reason, individuals may revoke their consent to have their interests encapsulated in others. Trust, says Elmore, is a compound of *respect*, listening to and valuing the views of others; *personal regard*, intimate and sustained personal relationships that undergird professional relationships; *competence*, the capacity to produce desired results in relationships with others; and *personal integrity*, truthfulness and honesty in relationships. He calls these 'discernments' exemplified as the way in which people make sense of one another's behaviour and intentions.

A measure of trust, however conditional, is a prerequisite of *support*, as support implies a relationship in which people experience a genuine intention to help on the part of the other without a hidden agenda, without a sense that this comes with caveats and some form of payback. At an individual level we experience support from friends and colleagues as an expression of genuine concern given unconditionally and without charge. The same principle applies at organisational level, yet in an accountability context it is hard to conceive of support which does not come with conditions and caveats attached.

Implicit in the New Relationship is that support is accompanied by *challenge*. These are uneasy bedfellows because they can only co-exist where the quality of support allows challenge to be heard and accepted. When people do not experience goodwill and genuine support they are very likely to respond badly to challenge. The combination of support and challenge is

implicit in the role of a critical friend – friend first and critic second, but the critical hat is only donned once a mutuality of relationship has been established. Schools' experience of Ofsted has in the past typically been one of challenge – often fruitful and appreciated but not always accompanied by a sense of support, critical but not always friendly.

It is through the fourth of these framing words – *networking* – that support and challenge are most likely to be bear fruit. Networking implies a collegial relationship, founded on voluntarism and initiative. It is built on reciprocity and a measure of trust. The ties that bind are conditional not on authority but on mutual gain, give and take, learning and helping others learn.

Accountability drives everything

It is not accidental that the Miliband speech quoted at the beginning of this chapter justified self-evaluation in these terms: 'An accountability framework, which puts a premium on ensuring effective and ongoing self-evaluation in every school combined with more focussed external inspection, linked closely to the improvement cycle of the school.'

Accountability drives everything. 'Without accountability there is no legitimacy; without legitimacy there is no support; without support there are no resources; and without resources there are no services.' In this conception of accountability it is realised through data, attainment related, comparative and benchmarked.[21]

> The data upon which we base our accountability mechanisms must reflect our core educational purposes. It must be seen to be objective. And it must allow for clear and consistent comparison of performance between pupils and between institutions.

This, as government sees it, is 'intelligent accountability', a term attributed to John Dunford of the Secondary Heads' Association (SHA), demonstrating that government can at once be intelligent as well as tough and that it can listen to the voice of the profession. But what does intelligent accountability mean? Its origins are in the 2002 Reith lecture given by Baroness O'Neill in which she pleads for an alternative to 'perverse indicators' which erode trust, distort purpose and provide signposts which point people along diversionary paths.[22]

Elmore makes an important distinction between internal and external accountability.[23] The former describes the conditions that precede and shape the responses of schools to pressure originating in policies outside the organisation. Internal accountability is measured by the degree of convergence among what individuals say they are responsible for (responsibility), what people say the organisation is responsible for (expectations), and the internal norms and processes by which people literally account for their work (accountability structures). He concludes that with strong internal

accountability schools are likely to be more responsive to external pressure for performance. Intelligent internal accountability suggests that schools will respond critically to external pressure, confident in the knowledge that they have a rich and unique story to tell, a story which rises above and goes beyond the mean statistics and pushes against prevailing orthodoxies of competitive attainment.

Notes

1 New relationships for old

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