"Governing by templates" through new modes of school inspection in Norway

Jeffrey Brooks Hall

Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo

Abstract

To date, few observational studies have addressed Scandinavian school inspectors in the field, specifically how inspectors use templates to monitor the formative assessment routines of schools and local school authorities. This paper investigates how the current inspection handbook is being adopted and enacted on the municipal level and the school level in Norwegian compulsory schools. Specifically, this study illuminates through observation two empirical examples of how one of the 17 County Governors' Offices, as part of a larger study, conducted regular, state school inspection. Conceptually, the paper focuses on how inspection guides and steers though use of fixed templates. Analysis shows that inspectors and schools under scrutiny are struggling in combining the traditional focus on legal compliance with a more performative emphasis on formative assessment of students. In addition, the examples given highlight how combining field observation and the concept of "governing by templates" contributes to school inspection studies, in a dynamic policy context undergoing substantial change.

Keywords: educational policy; governing by templates; governing tools; policy enactment; school inspection; school self-evaluation

Introduction

As suggested in several studies, we are currently moving towards a post-bureaucratic society, where knowledge plays a key role, and new ways of evaluating schools are developed using internal and external data such as school self-evaluation (SSE) (Baxter et al., 2015; Dedering & Müller, 2011; Hall & Sivesind, 2015; Lawn & Grek, 2012; Maroy, 2012; Nelson & Ehren, 2014; Ozga, 2009). Representing the "Evaluative State", checklists, templates, and rubrics are in multiple ways used to monitor schools (Maroy, 2012; Neave, 1988; Trujillo, 2014). Additionally, schools are encouraged to utilize these checklists aimed at improving their routines and performance for example in case of an upcoming inspection initiated by a state inspectoral body (Dedering & Müller, 2011; Perryman, 2006). Furthermore, the style of feedback and communication is a central aspect in how key actors view school inspection (SI) (Ehren & Visscher, 2006). Finally, as recently discussed by Behnke and Steins (2016), accountability systems vary internationally, from high-stakes environments based on test scores such as in the federal system of the United States, to systems more relying on SI as one of several external measures to ensure quality of schools such as for example in Germany, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (Behnke & Steins, 2016; Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Hall, 2017; Rönnberg, 2014).

In the case of Norway, as part of the current handbook for state inspection, templates developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (the Directorate) are enacted by the County Governors' Offices (CGOs), facilitating communication between the "auditors and auditees" (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Power, 1997). However, how such templates function as method of steering the inspection process and formative assessment routines of compulsory schools has been under-researched internationally. This paper is a contribution to widening the scope of inspection studies, the Norwegian context an example of such a conceptual application.

Previously, state SI in Norway mainly focused on controlling legal compliance (Sivesind, 2012). Norwegian schools however now actively take part in producing knowledge through pre-inspection processes and SSE, and in shaping both preliminary and final inspection reports. By inviting "operants" such as school principals and teachers to comment upon and amend reports, the current system offers the operants a chance to individually and collectively contribute to the enactment of state inspection policy within loosely coupled environments (Braun et al., 2010; Weick, 2009). Thus, SI policy in Norway is to some degree moving in the same direction as other European systems, including SSE as a vital tool in the

"inspectoral mixture", however with its own "flavour" where templates play a key role (Lawn & Grek, 2012).

Nevertheless, policy tools used by CGOs such as SSE, checklists, replicable rubrics and other "pretty papers" not only support and guide schools through the inspectoral process, but may also evaluate performance of the same entities (Trujillo, 2014, p. 215). The current change in Norwegian inspection policy represents a new way of monitoring schools, as part of the rise of what Apple (2005) coined "the audit culture" (Apple, 2005, p. 22).

As opposed to "governing by data" and "governing by numbers", which focus on translating and producing knowledge into benchmarks and indicators (Ball, 2015; Ozga & Grek, 2008; Ozga et al., 2011; Ozga & Segerholm, 2015), "governing through feedback" views feedback as a means of monitoring the past performance of individual schools (Bitan et al., 2015; Simons, 2014b). The aim of this paper is to elaborate on how the use of templates represents a new way of steering, normatively guiding schools in the "right" direction towards the future (Ozga & Segerholm, 2015). Thus, I introduce the concept of "governing by templates", where the use of fixed schemas functions as a key tool in the SI process, entailing substantial evaluative modes in addition to legal compliance (Hall & Sivesind, 2015).

This paper addresses the following research question: How does "governing by templates" represent a major shift in inspectoral policy and practice in Norway? Instead of focusing on "governing by numbers", a focus on "governing by templates" enquires into how school inspectors incorporate templates as a way of steering local formative assessment routines of individual schools, in the long run potentially intervening into the individual pedagogical practices of individual teachers. Inevitably, this implies a major change in how the inspectoral process in Norway is organized as well as in its main focus, suggesting new methods of scrutinizing the "auditees" (Power, 1997). I further raise questions concerning the "softness" of the templates, and to which extent such a shift represents a move towards more evaluative aspects of inspection.

To complete such an exploration, I include two separate illuminations of the inspectoral process in this paper, showing how SI teams investigated the formative assessment routines of two individual compulsory schools. A central theme of these rounds of SI was individual schools' procedures for continuous student assessment, representing a central part of teacher–student feedback (Wiliam, 2013). Section 3-11 of the Regulation (2006) pertaining to the Education Act (1998) highlights continuous assessment by acknowledging that: "Continuous assessment should be used as a tool in the learning process, as a basis for adapted education" (Regulation, 2006, §3-11). Controlling and evaluating schools' routines

and procedures for ensuring such individual rights of students is thus one of the main concerns in the current inspection cycle in Norway (Directorate of Education and Training, 2013a, 2016b; Sivesind, Skedsmo & Hall, 2016).

This study contributes to the research literature on SI studies by offering early empirical images of major changes in policy and practice in the Norwegian context, done by observing the enactment of inspection policy through use of the current SI handbook and accompanying templates (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). Since the Norwegian context is until now highly under-researched, the study adds to the field by filling in some of the existing gaps in international research on changing SI policy systems.

In the next section, a brief outline of international research on SI will be presented, followed by an overview of the conceptual framework employed in the study. Then the case of the Norwegian state school inspection process will be highlighted, and two empirical examples are rendered. Finally, the findings of the analysis are discussed, including the limitations and implications of the study.

School inspection in the international context

A wide range of studies on school inspection (SI) have been undertaken, focusing on multiple perspectives, settings and conceptual applications. In a recent study by Behnke & Steins (2016), scholars reported on inspection in the German context, especially at how SI functions as feedback, specifically investigating the perspectives of school principals following the inspection process.

Other scholars have discussed the impact of SI, looking at possible effects and side effects of inspection (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007), while some have critically investigated how school inspection aims to facilitate and assess quality in education, school improvement and performance (Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Perryman, 2006, 2007; Segerholm, 2009). Another key perspective in international SI studies is the concept of "governing by inspection", reporting on either national cases or comparative case studies (Grek & Lindgren, 2015). Within such a perspective, inspection is viewed as a way of steering school practice, connected to global and European flows of data and knowledge (Grek et al., 2013). A final key perspective in SI studies is seeing inspection as enactment of policy on the local and regional level, and how this affects school leadership (Baxter, 2014; Courtney, 2014; Wilkins, 2014).

As mentioned, international studies have to little extent addressed how templates strictly guide the SI process in compulsory schools, especially in the Scandinavian context.

This study critically views inspection as a way of acting upon state policy through use of templates, drawing on the conceptual perspectives of governing, governing tools and policy enactment (Braun et al., 2010; Clarke, 2015; Hood, 1983; Weick, 2009).

Conceptual framework

Current, ongoing shifts in state inspectoral frameworks are prevalent, and are considered to be dynamic and therefore fluctuous (Baxter et al., 2015). As part of these regulatory frameworks, a range of policy tools are administered by inspectorates in order to collect data and subsequently govern the practices of schools. As portrayed in several international studies in general, and in Scandinavian studies in particular, inspection is central in regulating how schools interpret and enact legal requirements pertaining to statutes and formal guidelines (Hall & Sivesind, 2015; Hatch, 2013; Helgøy & Homme, 2006; Lindgren, 2015; Rönnberg 2014).

As a conceptual starting point, I draw on Hood's (1983, 2007) typology of governing tools, where government controls society through use of a "toolkit", influencing the lives of its citizens by "applying a set of administrative tools, to suit a variety of purposes" (Hood, 1983, p. 2). Through inspection, individuals or an institution are required or forced through the law to give information to the enforcer (Foucault, 1987; Hood, 1983). Moreover, through applying these tools, SI is critically viewed as a process where the few (inspectors) control the legal practices of the many (schools, school leaders, and teachers), basing their judgments on a fixed set of legal and educational standards expressed through rubrics and templates (Bentham, 1843; Simons, 2014a, 2014b; Trujillo, 2014).

As a second conceptual stance, through the enactment of education policy in general, and more specifically in regard to state SI policy, policy actors such as inspectors and school principals are seen as interpreters and must thus understand and enact centrally initiated guidelines, legal statutes, and policy documents (Bowe et al., 1992; Braun et al., 2010; Weick, 2009). Drawing on the perspectives of Braun, Maguire, and Ball (2010), policy enactment may be seen as involving "creative processes of interpretation and recontextualisation – that is translation through reading, writing and talking of text into action and abstractions of policy ideas into contextualized practices" (Braun et al., 2010, p. 549).

Third, seeing inspection as a mixture of governing tools may be in a wide sense viewed as a blend of "governing at a distance" through, for example, legal statutes, as well as one of proximity, stemming from embodied regulation and use of templates based on the keen expert eye of the school inspector (Clarke, 2015, p. 11). As opposed to governance, I focus on

governing, meaning ways of regulating, guiding, steering, or controlling facets of societies (Clarke, 2015; Kooiman, 1993). SI, as one of multiple forms of governing, involves inspectors evaluating the educational and legal practices of schools and local school authorities. Such processes result in "an information-rich environment" of templates, documents, school self-evaluation (SSE) forms and inspection reports, which together comprise basis for feedback and reporting (Simons, 2014a).

As pointed out by Ball (2015), "governing by numbers" has played a central role in the way in which schools are measured, monitored and compared (Ball, 2015; Grek, 2009; Ozga & Grek, 2008). However, the configurations of these tools are shifting, moving from mere regulation to SSE, and thus generating a new focus for both the inspectoral authorities and the schools under scrutiny (Ozga, 2009; Simons, 2014a). This change in focus and tools involved in the education policy process represents increased use of tools such as SSE and performance feedback reports (Grek et al., 2010; Simons, 2014a, 2014b).

Finally, "governing by data" is another trait of the education sector in a wider, transnational sense, where key figures are translated into benchmarks (Ozga et al., 2011). However, rather than viewing inspection as merely governing by numbers or data, or through feedback, I introduce the concept of "governing by templates". This represents a shift from focus on mere formal regulation and feedback based on quality standards to increased emphasis on SSE, self-regulation and performance control through the use of rubrics (Ozga, 2009).

Consequently, this collection of various sources of information is in sum a basis for how inspectoral authorities perform audit of these educational facilities, in this case Norwegian compulsory schools. In such a system, the use of SSE, feedback and fixed rubrics developed by the Directorate are thus understood as a combined mixture of governing tools which are targeted at the assessment practices and interpretation of legal standards by schools and local school authorities.

School inspection in the Norwegian context

The call for improved quality assessment and evaluation (QAE) tools in Norway, such as state SI and national testing, emerged as a result of the "PISA shock" of 2000 as well as the introduction of the current national curriculum, known as "The Knowledge Promotion" in the mid-2000s (Elstad, 2009; Hatch, 2013; Hopmann, 2008; The Knowledge Promotion, 2006). New expectations led to the development of a national quality assessment system (NQAS), which in 2012 was relabelled as the Quality Assessment System (Directorate of Education

and Training, 2013b; Skedsmo, 2009). As a result, SI was eventually to become a key set of tools used to monitor local school authorities and individual schools (Hall, 2017; Hatch, 2013; Mausethagen, 2013; Skedsmo, 2009; Sivesind, 2012). When regular, state inspections were introduced in 2006, the main focus was on legal compliance and to little extent offered advice or guidance to schools who were under scrutiny (Sivesind, 2012; Sivesind et al., 2016).

State SI in Norway is however currently changing, increasingly governing through both school self-evaluation (SSE) and "soft-touch" regulation, as well as emphasis on quality assessment and evaluation (Grek & Lindgren, 2015; Hudson, 2011; Ozga et al., 2011; Sivesind et al., 2016). This partially follows a transnational movement, where central educational authorities and inspectorates are drawing from a common pool of ideas labelled the European Education Policy Space (EEPS) (Lawn & Grek, 2012).

Additionally, controlling legal compliance and assessing individual schools' routines for ensuring students' individual rights to fair assessment in accordance with legal statutes and regulation are still key focus points of the current inspection cycle (2014–2017) and state inspection handbook (Government Act, 1998; Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Regulation, 2006).

There are in total 17 County Governors' Offices (CGOs) in Norway, each responsible for carrying out regular, state and self-initiated inspections of (public) compulsory and upper-secondary schools in their respective counties. Inspections of private schools are however handled by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Learning outcomes ("elevenes utbytte av opplæringen") is one of the three main themes of the current state inspection cycle (Directorate for Teaching and Education, 2016b). However, such a focus is not linked to summative assessment or national testing of students, rather looking at learning outcomes in a wider sense, such as the formative assessment practices of schools. In a practical sense, this is for example done through the inspectors controlling if the individual schools' enactment of the national curriculum (The Knowledge Promotion, 2006) is in line with legal demands put forth in the Education Act (1998).

From a researcher's point of view, it was of interest to see if this system differed from what was carried out during the period 2006–2012, when regular, state inspections of schools were (re)instated in Norway (Hall & Sivesind, 2015). Through investigating the materialization of the current inspection handbook enacted from 2014 until 2017, I had the unique possibility to observe ongoing processes of state SI policy enactment in a dynamic system which has still not settled.

Inspection teams, led by the CGOs, inspect schools to control and evaluate if the legal practices of schools, school principals, and local school districts are in line with requirements set forth in legal statutes and regulations. The initial step in the SI process in Norway is for the CGO to notify targeted schools, requesting them to prepare for the upcoming round of inspection. Such a notice includes the scope of inspection, for example formative student assessment, outline of legal mandate, and examples of templates used to develop interview guides. Prior to the onsite inspection visit, the "auditees" (Power, 1997) must then compile a wide range of documents and plans (SSE) to substantiate their written routines within the area of focus. In the current round of regular, state SI (2014–2017), SSE such as student and teacher surveys are included, which are the basis for interview guides used by inspectors during onsite inspection. Third, the CGO inspectors hold a pre-meeting to lay out the aims, legal mandate and focus point for the school's principal, middle leaders, local school authorities and selected staff. Subsequent to the pre-meeting, the inspectors collect interview data based on templates developed by the Directorate.

After interviews with key actors such as the principal and teachers are held, the inspectors return to their headquarters and compile a preliminary report which is channelled to the school and local school authorities for commenting. Upon completion of the preliminary report, the CGO conducts a post-meeting with all the key actors to present their findings. Eventually, the CGOs are encouraged to invite all school principals, local school authorities and community in the municipality in question to share the SI results (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a, p. 33).

Following the post-meeting, and in case of legal deviances, schools under scrutiny must amend plans and routines to ensure alignment with national guidelines and legal statutes. The CGO in charge of the investigation then completes a final report, which is published on their website.

Research design and method

This is a qualitative case study of one of the 17 CGOs in Norway (CGO "East"), drawing on data from a larger inquiry of key actors on regional (county) and local (municipal and school) levels (Legal Standards and Professional Judgment in Educational Leadership, LEX-EL, 2016). I purposely selected the CGO, as well as the schools and municipalities, from the database in the larger LEX-EL study based on similar social-economic statistics from Statistics Norway (2016a, 2016b). The semi-structured field observations were done through shadowing inspection teams during the enactment of the current inspection handbook

(Bryman, 2011; Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007; Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Silverman, 2011). Field observation, through shadowing school inspectors, had not been identified in previous studies of the Norwegian SI system, and gave me a unique advantage to report on initial enactment of the current inspection handbook. Data included in the study was collected during 2013 and 2014.

The three schools in the overall observational study ("Greenfield Elementary School", "Blue Meadow Lower Secondary School" and "Red Hill Elementary School") are situated within the same county and region in eastern Norway. They are all supervised by CGO "East". The study is primarily based on observation data solely collected from 9 out of 13 meetings in two compulsory (elementary and lower-secondary level) schools in two separate municipalities (see Table 1). These two schools, one primary school ("Red Hill") and one lower secondary school ("Blue Meadow"), were selected in order to get more variation in the data, and to compare data across school types and municipalities within the same county.

"Blue Meadow Lower Secondary School" was observed during enactment of the inspection handbook (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a), and is a lower secondary school. The school has approximately 500 students from 8th to 10th grade and 80 teachers in a large, semi-urban municipality with 35,000 inhabitants. Observations of meetings in "Blue Meadow" were of the opening meeting, inspectors interviewing the school principal, inspectors conducting a group interview with teachers from the English department, and finally the closing meeting where the preliminary inspection report was presented.

"Red Hill Elementary School" is situated in a more rural part of the same county, approximately 45 minutes from a major town in the eastern part of Norway. "Red Hill" is in a small municipality comprised of 8,000 inhabitants, and the school has about 50 staff members and 350 students from 1st to 7th grade. Observation of the inspection process in this school was also done during enactment of the current inspection handbook (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). I observed the opening meeting at the school, inspectors conducting an interview with the principal, a group interview with a mixture of subject teachers, and the closing meeting.

Table 1 presents a summary of the schools/municipalities and observational data. The examples supplied below draw on data from Observation Points 3 and 9:

[**Table 1** Overview of observation sites, participants and data]

A prerequisite to carry out field studies is to attain trust and acceptance from the participants who are to be observed (Grønmo, 2004). Prior to arriving onsite at the schools, the three principals were fully informed by the inspection team, and the principals granted me access to attend and observe the inspection processes. Additionally, all other participants were fully informed about the project.

As a researcher, I was clear that I was to be a non-participant observer, striving to record in writing exactly what each of the actors present said during the meetings. I carefully made observation notes during all of the preliminary inspection meetings, on-site interviews during inspection processes with school principals and teachers, and finally the meetings where each school received feedback and the preliminary inspection report (PR) was presented. In all meetings, I took complete verbatim notes, exceeding 60 pages of data. These field notes represent the primary data used in this study, together with the current inspection handbook and accompanying templates, school self-evaluation (SSE) forms completed by the schools under scrutiny, and legal statutes and regulation serving as secondary data (Government Act, 1998; Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Regulation, 2006).

Following data collection, the observation data was uploaded in the software package Hyper Research in order to facilitate analysis. The data was first openly read, and then I reread it to uncover certain patterns and categories (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011; Silverman, 2011). The chunks of data were then openly theme-coded according to categories stemming from the overall conceptual framework of the study (Sivesind, 1999).

First I read through the whole data material, and chose to focus on two of the three schools. Following initial reading of observations in the two schools, I then selected the two images of empirical data in order to capture contrasting aspects of the use of templates during the SI process; namely first how teachers were interviewed by CGO inspectors and in the second account how formal leaders on the municipal level interact with the inspectors. Furthermore, I selected the two points of observation (3 and 9) to give an overall image of the inspection process, representing the whole dataset by showing different aspects of how the CGOs used the templates to guide and steer the inspection process.

Representing an additional source of data, I was given full access to multiple pre-inspection documents, school self-evaluation (SSE) templates, preliminary inspection reports

(PR) and final inspection reports from the schools (see Table 1). These reports serve as contextual information, and add to my overall interpretation and understanding of the SI processes taking place in these schools.

Blue Meadow Lower Secondary School: observing interviews of teachers

After following the piloting phase of the state school inspection handbook in 2012/2013 (not included in this paper), the next step in the study was to shadow Inspection Team B during enactment of the current handbook during the 2013/2014 academic year and the fall of 2014 (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). The theme of the current inspection cycle (2014-2017) is student learning outcomes, for examples focusing on the formative assessment routines and practices of compulsory schools and upper-secondary schools. In this round of observation, Inspection Team B consisted of three inspectors (Inspector 1, Inspector 2 and Inspector 3). Inspector 1 (I1) was female, and a former educator, and Inspector 3 (I3), a former lawyer and male. Inspector 2 (I2) had recently become part of the inspection team and was a trained educator. I was granted access to be an observer, both in preparation of the inspection, during the inspection process and in the feedback meetings with key actors such as school principals and teachers, once the preliminary report (PR) was compiled. Before the inspection visit on site, a pre-inspection meeting at the CGO was held, where my role as an observer was discussed.

The following excerpt is from a group interview with three English teachers at Blue Meadow Lower Secondary School (Observation Point 3). They taught English as a foreign language (EFL) in grades 8–10. English teacher 1, "Mary", was a female in her 40s who had a long teaching career. English teacher 2, "Eva", was a woman in her early 30s who had been teaching at the school for some years. English teacher 3, "William", was a male in his early 50s who also had long teaching experience at the school.

After a brief round of presentations, Inspector 1 quickly began asking the teachers questions based on the SSE survey completed by the students, prior to the onsite inspection:

> I1: We have looked at the SSE. We wonder how the school principal checks these plans [referring to the annual plans from the English department].
> Mary: We send them in, and the administration publishes them on the school's website. We do a lot of feedback on ITL [referring to the school's digital learning platform]. I don't know if you have access?
> I1: Is there any form of follow-up if these are not completed?
> Mary: We usually hand them in on time.

I1: Do you have annual plans or three-year plans?

Mary and William (in unison): Three-year plans.

I1: In all subject areas?

William: I think so … not sure, though. Yes, I do think so.

I3: How are all of the competency aims checked?

William: By the school's leadership team.

Inspector 1 then moved on to more specific questions based on the SSE student survey and pre-inspection documentation furnished by the school. The theme now concerned how formative (and to some extent summative) assessment was ensured in their classrooms, and how formative assessment practices differed between science education and English. Interestingly, the inspector asked them questions not only within their area of competency, but also concerning other colleagues' assessment practices:

> I1: Over to the SSE ("egenraporteringen"). Any reflections concerning the students' responses [referring to the student survey]?
>
> William: All feedback is on ITL, in addition to orally in the classroom.
>
> I1: Encouraging feedback [feed forward] in, for example, science gets a lower score than, for example, in English.
>
> William: The distinctiveness of each subject. English is maybe more concrete than science.
>
> [Pause]
>
> I1: Now, over to more on assessment. Is there a deadline for grading?
>
> Mary: It's in the teacher's activity plan on ITL.
>
> I1: Do you have a template for student–teacher conversations?
>
> Mary: Yes, but I don't have it with me.
>
> I1: Moving on to question 14 in the student survey. Assessment for Learning. There are lots of good examples of good practice. We are wondering about Reading Development Forms ["LUS/ Leseutviklingsskjema"] and the "Carlsten test" [reading speed test].
>
> Mary: It's written down somewhere…. [Insecurity among the three teachers, and they look at each other]
>
> [Pause]

I1: Assessment [formative] in all school subjects. Do you know anything about other subjects than Norwegian, mathematics and English? What about religion? And social studies?

Mary: It takes place when we go through homework assignments. We try to vary….

William: Assessment situations are written down in annual plans and in subject plans.

I1: The principal says in the SSE that the department heads follow up. Is that correct?

Mary and William (in unison): Yes, that is correct.

Shortly after, the interview with the English teachers ended, and there was a 30-minute break where the inspectors went through teacher responses, wrote down meeting minutes and then presented the minutes to teachers for verification.

We see that the inspectors briskly moved through the interview guides, carefully taking notes, but not stopping and contemplating upon or following up on what the interviewees revealed about the school's use of the national curriculum (The Knowledge Promotion, 2006). At the same time, the inspection team puts clear emphasis on the results of the student survey, which together with templates deriving from the Directorate formed the basis for the interview guide used during the inspection process. Finally, the inspectors were clearly engaged in controlling the school leadership's routines for following up on the intentions of the central educational authorities; the Directorate and the Ministry of Education.

As the excerpts above reveal, the student survey conducted among students at the school played an important role in the development of the interview guide used by the inspectors to investigate the formative assessment routines of teachers in an array of subjects. Additionally, the English teachers were confronted not only on their own assessment practices, but also the practices of their colleagues. The interview guide clearly steers the way in which the inspectors carried out the questioning, not leaving much leeway for follow-up questions. Moreover, the inspectors also ask the teachers about how the school's leadership team, consisting of department heads and the principal, monitored how the teachers execute their assessment of student progress.

Red Hill Elementary School: observing the closing meeting

The final step of the study was to follow Inspection Team C during the inspection at Red Hill Elementary School. Attending the closing meeting (Observation Point 9, Table 1) were the inspection team of two inspectors from CGO "East", in addition to the school's principal (Principal Jones), the municipality's superintendent of education (Superintendent Hansen),

one of the teachers interviewed by the SI team, a department head and finally another principal from one of the neighbouring lower-secondary schools. Inspectors 1 (I1) and 3 (I3) were the same informants as in observation point 3 outlined in this paper; Inspector 1 a previous educator and Inspector 3 a trained lawyer. Principal Jones had been the leader of Red Hill for many years, and Superintendent Hansen was moving towards the end of her career.

As in the inspection at Blue Meadow, the main focus of the inspection process at Red Hill was formative assessment routines and practices of the school and of the teachers, and how the school leadership ensured that this was in accordance to legal statutes and regulation. The inspection's focus was in line with the overall focus of the current inspection cycle (2014-2017) and the recent handbook (The Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). The following example offers an overview of how SSE through use of a survey administered to the students and the templates play a vital role in the feedback process. At the beginning of the closing meeting, Superintendent Hansen commented on the preliminary report (PR):

Superintendent Hansen: It is a thorough report you have written.

I1: I am glad to hear that.

Superintendent Hansen: Then we can use the report for further work…

Inspector 3 started to introduce the PR through the use of a PowerPoint presentation based on the template, and explained how it would be presented. Principal Jones then quickly raised his hand, signalling the wish to pose a question before the actual presentation commenced:

Principal Jones: Is it possible to provide some input concerning the [preliminary] report?

I3: Yes, that is possible as we go along. I would like to say something about the focus points in the report. If we conclude with a "no" on one of the control questions, it is a clear [legal] offense which must be corrected.

Principal Jones: I have attended training [referring to the training course concerning the new inspection handbook], and am aware of the focus of the inspection.

Inspector 3 continued his presentation, seemingly unstirred, briskly moving through the PR. He moved to slide six in the presentation, concerning the Directorate's clarifications and guidelines of the legal basis for SI:

I3: The overall impression is very good. The final report may look different. We have an example from Municipality X, where there were differences between the preliminary report and the final report.

The inspector here refers to a previous round of inspection in a neighbouring municipality, and then flips to slide 7 in the PR:

I3: There is a system [at this school] where the leadership follows up, and there are written routines. We see that you have worked with Assessment for Learning (AFL), and that there are "target boards" in each classroom. And we have seen them on the way to this meeting. We observe that there are individual plans for students receiving special education, and that there is conformity…

Principal Jones: Should I comment here?

I3: Yes, by all means.

Principal Jones: [I] see there is some discrepancy between the points outlined in the PR and your presentation here, so I am a bit confused.

I3: The municipal plans are not updated.[unclear]. Any further comments here?

Inspector 3 refers here to target posters ("måltavler") in each classroom visualizing targets (or learning outcomes) in each subject area, which were during observations highly visible from the hallway when the inspection team were one their way to the closing meeting. Inspector 3 continued to slide 8 in the PR, which concerned the school's routines for AFL:

I3: The next point is AFL. We have observed that you have routines for mid-term assessment, so this is covered well. You also have routines for [unclear…], so that is a concern. On background of the student responses [referring to the student SSE survey], we conclude that this isn't good enough.

Principal Jones: So you probably understand that we don't really agree.

I3: Really?

Principal Jones: I mean that the student survey isn't really sufficient [referring to the table in PR Point 2.3.1 where the principal felt the student responses were somewhat unclear]. I would actually claim that there is something here which is incorrect. This doesn't make sense, and we therefore don't agree with the numbers.

I3: Really?

I1: The survey does include something which is not here. It concerns different questions, which are not included in the summary. When we have chosen to land on a "no", it is due to the fact your responses in the SSE, compared to feedback from the students themselves in questions 5 and 6 concerning their participation in their own work process. Therefore, we think that you are on track, but still not good enough.

Principal Jones: What do you mean we should do?

I3: That the teachers become more aware of this, so there is not a whole lot you have to do.

Principal Jones: Then it has to become a part of the daily feedback [to the students].

I1: So that brings us back to what a routine is, and what an "implemented routine" is. The question is what has to be done in order to implement it.

In this example, interrogation of the school's principal led to a discourse between the inspection team and the "auditee". However, it is quite clear that the inspectors rather easily moved on through their PR, even though Principal Jones questioned the relevance of the student survey. The meeting continued, and was near closure:

I1: There is a change in the new inspection handbook. The Local Government Act grants schools the right to correct [any] discrepancies following the final report [when it is made available], which is a "three-stage rocket".

I3: Even if we are really down on the school level, it is the local school authorities who have the final responsibility. [Just] give us a short declaration of the amendments made. Any questions?

Principal Jones and Superintendent Hansen (in unison): No.

Principal Jones: When I received notice of inspection, I thought "Darn!" But, once we sat down, it felt good to get an overview of what actually is in place.

I1: We try to help out. Of course it is time-consuming.

Superintendent Hansen: It is good that the County Governor's Office has a different approach than previously. With more support.

I1: Yes, since we do lay down so many resources, it is a good development.

I3: What will be interesting is to return after a year, and see if changes have been made. We do take aim at getting through all municipalities, and there are three areas [of focus], so there might be new rounds [of inspection].

As seen above, towards the end of the meeting Inspector 1 outlines the three-stage inspection procedures, referring to the inspection handbook (Directorate of Education and Training, 2013a) and section 10D in the Local Government Act (1992). Following presentation of the preliminary report (stage 1), a final report is compiled after feedback from both schools/local school authorities and CGO (stage 2). The schools/local school authorities are then given the opportunity to correct any irregularities or discrepancies before the final judgment is made (stage 3). The final report is always openly published on the official CGO webpage.

The meeting was adjourned after approximately 65 minutes, and the participants thanked each other for the session and exchanged trivialities, all in a seemingly good mood. The inspection team packed their bags and left the premises shortly after, returning to the CGO "East" headquarters to revise and compile the final inspection report.

Discussion

As pointed out by Braun et al. (2010), policy-makers on the central level "do not always take account of the complexity of policy enactment environments [where schools] must respond to multiple policy demands and expectations (Ball, 1997, cited in Braun et al., 2010, p. 548). In such an environment, local school authorities and school principals must navigate in a difficult policy landscape, where they are prone to a wide array of central policy initiatives, legal statutes and regulations. For some schools, receiving a visit from the auditing authorities may be perceived as a feared experience (Dedering & Müller, 2011). However, for other schools, this is rather considered as an opportunity for a legal and pedagogical check and balance exercise, where deviances from legal statutes and regulations may spark an awareness of which direction the school under scrutiny should be moving. A question which arises here is if schools are now prone to a "softer" approach to governing than previously. However, as suggested in this paper, the opposite may actually be the case in Norway.

From hard evidence to softer information?

As shown in the study, a shift in the configuration of governing tools is immanent, ranging from "hard evidence", such as in the Norwegian case deviation from legal standards put forth in The Education Act (1998) and Regulation (2006), to "softer" information which is more contextualized such as SSE (Simons, 2014a). The mixture of these tools is thus changing, including soft, coercive aspects, as well as substantialized and standardized documents and legal statutes based on templates. In this mixture of tools, these fixed templates play a vital role, and are thus rigidly forming both the inspection procedures as well as how the interviews as well as preliminary and final meetings evolve.

Through this paper, I have proposed that "the black box of Norwegian school inspection" is opened up (Latour, 1987; Lindgren, 2015). The data at hand, represented by the two empirical accounts, reveals a striking dialog, where the "auditors" and the "auditees" engage in conversations which are clearly steered through the use of fixed templates. By rapidly moving through the guiding templates during the interview sessions with English teachers at Blue Meadow Lower Secondary School, as well as in course of delivering their preliminary report in Red Hill Elementary School, the CGO inspectors do not have ample time to stop and absorb the feedback they received from the "auditees" (Power, 1997). Thus, the templates strictly guided how the meetings were held, and finally how the preliminary and final reports were compiled. This has implications for the content of the preliminary as well as final reports, since much of the valuable information may be lost in the inspection process. This occurs since finalizing the reports, within the given timeframe, is a time-consuming for the CGO officers. Moreover, since the inspectors are themselves accountable towards their superiors, the Directorate, they are required to complete and deliver a certain volume of inspection reports per year in order to satisfy the system.

Another example of how the templates, as one of several tools, steer the dynamics of the inspectoral process is illuminated in the second empirical account in this study, where Principal Jones at Red Hill attempted to question certain points made in the inspection team's presentation of their PR. Furthermore, the principal clearly stated towards the end of the closing meeting that he experienced insecurity as to how he would respond to such external assessment. However, during the meeting, this response seemed to develop, becoming (at least not showing otherwise) more positive towards the inspectoral process.

Targeting formative assessment of students

Moreover, even if school inspectors in Norway today seem to be more satisfied with their increased supportive role, their approach in the surveillance of schools is undergoing predominant change (Hall, 2017). Enactment of the current inspection handbook and accompanying templates is now increasingly spearheaded towards new areas of concern, specifically formative student assessment (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Directorate for Education and Training, 2016a). As clearly demonstrated in both empirical illuminations, individual schools were required to document and discuss their formative assessment practices through both school self-evaluation (SSE) and in the form of written, implemented, all-school routines. The Ministry of Education passed in 2015 an amendment in demands in Regulation FOR-2006-06-23-724 (2006), which until then had required schools to

document in writing that formative assessment has been given to all students in each subject. In the current system, schools must not longer document that formative assessment has been given to all students, since such a central demand "implied unnecessary bureaucracy for schools" (Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 1). However, the same document also states: "It is within the power of the school district to demand additional documentation than what follows from demands put forth in the law" (Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 2). This may have further implications on the focus of future inspections in the Norwegian case, although not revealed in the current data set collected in 2013-2014. Nevertheless, through analysis of the data in this study, teachers and school leaders are now undoubtedly directly prone to evaluation of their assessment routines, which moreover represents a link between formative assessment as one of the key targets of the Directorate and the inspection handbook (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a). Such feedback, presented to local school authorities, schools, school leaders and teachers, represents a way of governing the future or "adjusting future conduct by focusing on past performance" (Simons, 2014a, p.721).

A more performative approach?

A central question arising through the data presents above is how such tools, through the use of fixed templates, is used in order to both *control* and *support* schools through the inspectoral process (Baxter et al., 2015). In this sense, "governing by templates", for example through widespread use of SSE, implies more than merely lending schools a helping hand. Thus, I propose that SI has taken on a more performance-based approach to directly govern schools from below disguised as a supportive mode, where increased interaction between "the few and the many" is however encouraged (Bentham, 1843). Finally, this study moreover advocates that such a supportive mode of governing in the most recent cycle of regular, state inspection may lead to schools being more directly steered than ever before by the CGOs and their superiors, the Directorate. Thus, not only do the CGOs control educational institutions, but they are themselves subjects of inspection "from above" (Foucault, 1987, p. 197).

In this paper, I have also argued that this new approach, as part of emerging expectations and external and hierarchical forms of accountability represents a greater level of intervention than what we have seen in previous inspectoral regimes in Norway (Elstad, 2009). Thus, a movement towards more direct and indirect forms of surveillance may be in the making. Furthermore, governing through the use of templates may be potentially marketed as a supportive mode of governing, but rather functions as controlling schools through neo-

liberal agendas to a greater extent than before (Ozga & Segerholm, 2015). However, based on the observation data at hand, there are findings suggesting that such processes may also include monitoring aspects.

As Ozga (2009) has shown in a study from the U.K., there is an ongoing movement from regulation to self-regulation of public providers such as schools. Nevertheless, in the movement from old to new inspectoral regimes, there exists in Norway a genuine wish among key actors to refresh SI as not only controlling schools' legal practices, but also to help and support school principals and local school authorities to disentangle legal obstacles (Hall, 2017). Thus, in the Norwegian case, even if there has evidently been a clear shift to focus on SSE, this does not rule out controlling each school's legal compliance, but also embraces "softer" forms of regulation such as use of student surveys and SSE through templates in the quest for producing knowledge in an information-rich environment (Simons, 2014a).

Finally, through tracing policy in the making by shadowing school inspectors in the field from pilot to implementation of the current inspection handbook (Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a), the examples given above unveil the enactment of SI policy through use of templates in the Norwegian case (Braun et al., 2010). Analysis of the empirical data shows that inspectors, as well as schools under scrutiny, are struggling in adapting to the new role of the regular national inspection focusing not only on legal compliance, but the formative assessment of students.

Conclusion

To sum up, what then does this paper then claim to illuminate? These two accounts supply examples of how the agenda of standardization is seeping into the Norwegian arena of national policy on school inspection. The question of a "one-size-fits-all" approach to SI through the use of such tools as rubrics arises through the empirical data, where templates actively shape the thinking of actors involved on both the meso- and micro-levels of policy enactment (Braun et al., 2010; Weick, 2009). However, it should be noted that the enactment of such templates are still in the making, and thus should be considered as still emerging. Finally, these processes take place in a system not characterized by "naming, shaming and blaming" and high-stakes accountability but rather in a low-stakes environment where making the templates "fit" may count more than mere legal alignment (Elstad, 2009).

There is moreover reason to ask if "governing by templates" implies expedient use of schools' limited financial and educational resources, and moreover question if such forms of steering contribute to making schools better and more equipped to take on future pedagogical

challenges in education. Based on this study, there are no indications of such. On the contrary, I would rather argue that since school inspection in its new form is both demanding and resource intensive, time could be used more constructively than merely moving through a set of fixed templates, and rather listen actively to the "auditees".

According to a larger, comparative study on SI systems in Scotland, England and Sweden, one of the most striking aspects of these national cases has been the constant shifts in both inspectoral frameworks and criteria (Baxter et al., 2015). As discussed by Fourcade (2010), school inspection frameworks are in the study by Baxter et al. (2015) portrayed as "an infrastructure of rules", which actively shape and govern the way in which the inspection process is carried out, as well as how the inspectors make their judgements. Moreover, such shifts in frameworks may derive from neo-liberal policy tensions arising between central and decentralized forms of governing, however at the same acknowledging that the three case countries have chosen different trajectories based on two key values: varying emphasis on control and development (Baxter et al., 2015). The first derives from society's need for compliance control, and at the same time expressing support, guidance and developmental modes of governing (Hall & Sivesind, 2015).

Building on Baxter et al.'s (2015) study and other previous investigations of governing as change processes, this paper has unveiled some of the dynamics of changes in the Norwegian school inspection system (see, for example, Ozga, 2009; Simons, 2014b). The empirical data has thus not only highlighted a dynamic system in transition, but one which is still incomplete in its processes and where the result is still not given as such. Such shifts have been recently emphasized in a key study of state school inspection, in which the main discourse emerging from an international literature review of the field was the challenging balance in late-modern societies to maintain control and at the same time to offer targeted schools support (Hall, 2016). As discussed above, the current system is nevertheless highly monitoring in its approach, thus predominantly focused on controlling schools under scrutiny, even if policy actors express the need to also support the same schools (Hall, 2017).

A short note on limitations of this study includes the question of generalization, which naturally is not a goal in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2011, p. 369). This paper draws on qualitative data from three single municipalities and three compulsory schools in one Norwegian county. As argued by Nelson and Ehren (2014), the use of inspection frameworks may have influence upon the school's enactment of the curriculum, thus narrowing the teaching practices in individual schools and classrooms. Even is this qualitative paper is not situated within a study of effects and side effects, which would call for a more quantitative

approach, analysis of the observation data does suggest inspection through templates at least make teachers and school principals reflect upon their own teaching and leadership practices. However, a follow-up study of these entities in regard to how they experienced the SI process, as well as how they have utilized the final inspection reports, would be highly fruitful, adding to the overall understanding of these dynamic processes. A next step would then be to include survey data among the school's teaching staff and formal leadership, to investigate if the inspection process had led to any lasting change. Finally, it would be highly interesting to address the dynamics of power relations emerging in the communication taking place between school inspectors, school leaders, and teachers. This would require applying a more discourse-oriented approach to the data, possibly going beyond "governing by templates" path discussed in this study.

In the end, such a transformation is occurring in a policy context in the midst of development from a predominantly control-based focus to increased focus on intervention and quality assessment, where on the one hand schools' pedagogical and assessment praxis is increasingly scrutinized. On the other hand, the widespread use of templates and SSE as additional parts of the "inspectoral toolkit" represents a new way of governing schools and local school authorities. If this is the case, then SI in Norway is developing more in the direction of other European inspectoral systems, which is a question that has been raised in recent studies and should be further examined (Grek et al., 2013; Hall & Sivesind, 2015). Implications for additional research moreover suggest it would be highly relevant to collect more qualitative as well as quantitative data where inspectors can elaborate on their roles, and how SI and "governing by templates" has become a central part of the current Quality Assessment System (NQAS) (Skedsmo, 2009). Through employing this concept, by focusing on how templates govern the inspectoral process, an additional lens for understanding how policy actors in organizations such as schools is offered, which may be used in further studies outside the Scandinavian and European realms.

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Municipalities/schools	Inspection process	Participants	Points of observation	Documents
Municipality/school B: **Blue Meadow Lower-secondary school**	Enactment phase	-Inspection team B -School principal -Teachers -Observer	1. Opening meeting 2. Interview with principal **3. Group interview with English teachers** 4. Closing meeting	-Inspection handbook -Pre-inspection documents -Self-evaluation (SSE) forms -Preliminary inspection report (PR) -Power Point presentation of PR -Final inspection report
Municipality/school C: **Red Hill Primary school**	Enactment phase	-Inspection team C -School principal -Teachers -Observer -Superintendent[ii]	6. Opening meeting 7. Interview with principal 8. Group interview with teachers **9. Closing meeting**	-Inspection handbook -Pre-inspection documents -Self-evaluation (SSE) forms -Preliminary inspection report (PR) -Power Point presentation of PR -Final inspection report

Table 1. Overview of observation sites, participants and data[i]

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[i] A third school was also observed (piloting phase), but has been omitted from this paper since the data is not included.

[ii] The municipal superintendent of education (Superintendent Hansen) was present only at the closing meeting at Red Hill Elementary School.