Current issues in supervision: a literature review
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PRESENTATION OF THE SERIES

This publication is the first of a series on ‘Trends in school supervision’, which accompanies the implementation of an IIEP project on ‘Improving teacher supervision and support services for basic education’. The project, which began in 1996, is one of the main research components of the Institute’s Medium Term Plan 1996-2001.

Earlier research, at the Institute and elsewhere, has pointed to the need, in an era of increased decentralization and school autonomy, to strengthen the skills of personnel involved in supervision and support at local level and in schools.

Two related points are worth mentioning here, as they form both the background to and the rationale for the IIEP’s concern with this area of management. Firstly, professional supervision and support services for teachers, although existing in almost every country for a long time, have been ignored, increasingly so since resources have become more scarce. This neglect has, until recent times, been reflected by a similar indifference among researchers. Secondly, one important reason why the quality of basic education has deteriorated in many contexts is precisely related to the weakening of these services.

The IIEP project, which has been developed against this background, consists of research, training and dissemination activities. Its specific objectives are to assist countries in diagnosing and reforming their existing services of supervision and support, and to identify promising strategies for the reorganization and strengthening of these services. The series of publications, of which this monograph is the first volume, is the result of research, implemented in several regions, to address a number of questions, such as:

• How is supervision and support organized in different countries? What have been the major trends in the recent evolution?
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- What are the principal problems which supervision and support services are presently facing in terms of: organizational structures; overall management of the services; and their daily functioning?

- To what extent and under what conditions do these services have a positive impact on the quality of the teaching-learning processes in schools?

- What are the major innovations taking place, mainly in respect of the devolution of supervision and support to the school-site level? How do these innovations operate? What are the main results?

In order to formulate answers to these different questions, the project elaborated the following operational definition of school supervision and support services: all those services whose main function is to control and evaluate, and/or advise and support schoolheads and teachers. The main focus of the project is on external supervision and support, that is to say on the work of inspectors, supervisors, advisers, counsellors, etc. located outside the school, at local, regional or central levels. A common characteristic of all these officers is that regular visits to schools are an essential part of their mandate.

However, many countries, in their attempts to reform and innovate supervision, are increasingly relying on in-school or community-based strategies (such as resource centres, school clusters, in-school supervision by the principal or by peers, school-based management) to complement, if not to replace external supervision and support. The project will therefore also study a number of innovations and, in more general terms, the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.

This series: ‘Trends in school supervision’, will thus consist of a variety of titles: national diagnoses on supervision and support, comparative analyses of the situation by region, case studies on innovative experiences, monographs and discussion papers on specific management issues. It is hoped that this series will fill a gap in education research as well as be an inspiration, in particular to policy-makers intending to reform supervision, and to supervisors who want to improve on their practice.
INTRODUCTION

This review will examine how far school supervision and support services are a crucial element in improving the quality of basic education. These services, although long existing in almost every country, have been severely neglected by policy-makers, increasingly so since resources have become more scarce. This policy neglect has been reflected by a similar indifference among researchers. Indeed, the most recent comprehensive study on school supervision in developing countries dates from the mid-1970s (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976). During more recent years, however, changes in education policies and reforms in education management have fundamentally affected supervision and support services and this has contributed to a renewed interest in their functioning, in particular in developed countries (e.g. Hopes, 1992; OECD, 1995).

In all countries, supervision and support services have, throughout their long history, become complex and intricate systems, undergoing various changes and reforms, the direction of which is not yet fully clear. To study such a vast system is ambitious and potentially confusing. It may be useful, therefore, to identify an operational definition in order to provide the analysis with a focus and clear boundaries. For the purpose of this review, the term 'supervision and support services' should be understood as covering all those services whose main function is to inspect, control, evaluate and/or advise, assist, and support schoolheads and teachers. Accordingly, the main focus of the review will be on external supervision and support, that is to say on the work of supervisors, advisers, counsellors, etc. located outside the school, at local, regional or central levels. A common characteristic of all these officers is that regular visits of schools is an essential part of their mandate. It may be useful to make two additional remarks from the outset: firstly, school support receives considerably less attention in the literature than supervision, which might be a reflection of their relative importance in most countries.¹ Second, different countries,

¹ This also explains why this review generally refers to 'supervisors', as a comprehensive term for all those actors involved in supervision and support. Where support actors are particularly concerned, they will be so identified.
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in an attempt to reform and improve on the existing supervision and support structures, are increasingly concentrating on internal, i.e. in-school, devices. Such devices will also be considered to the extent required for an understanding of their implications for the functioning of the external services and in order to keep a holistic perspective.

This review, based on a selection of publications and documents available through the IIEP Documentation Centre, consists of five parts. Part I depicts some of the current reforms in education management, in the light of their impact on school supervision and support. It will also refer to the results of recent research on education quality and school effectiveness. As such, it will explain the reasons for a renewed interest in this field. Part II addresses two central issues when studying school supervision: firstly, what is the function of supervisors and/or pedagogical advisers in the education system, in other words: why do these services exist? Second, how are supervision services organized? This is a rather complex matter, not only because of the differences between countries, but also because of the large number of existing services. The sometimes labyrinthine structure of these services and the lack of co-ordination between them is quoted as one main difficulty in efficient supervision. Part III provides a more detailed overview of the fairly large list of problems which supervision and support services are facing in developed as well as in developing countries. These problems are related mainly to certain inherent conflicts in the roles of supervisors, the conditions under which they operate, and the way in which their services are currently managed. Part IV discusses the different reforms which have been or are being tried out to improve the efficiency of supervision, and it highlights some crucial issues which need to be addressed to improve the impact of supervision and support on the quality of schools. It will refer, therefore, to the experience of some of the more successful education reforms in recent years. Finally, some concluding remarks will be formulated.
I. THE CHANGING CONTEXT

What research has taught us

Both in developing and in developed countries, education policy-makers have shifted their attention from expansion issues to quality issues, in particular since the early 1980s. The reasons for this shift were slightly different in the two cases. The almost exponential growth in student numbers experienced by developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s was unmatched by the growth in school supplies, didactic materials and qualified teachers. The result was an overall decrease in the quality of education and, in many countries, an increase in regional disparities. Decrepit schools without the basic minimum supplies and with poorly qualified teachers became commonplace. Several large-scale projects were implemented to redress this situation. They focused on school maintenance and textbook development, on teacher training and community financing of school inputs. They carried obvious names such as: 'operation blackboard' or 'operation science kits'. While such projects undoubtedly improved the availability of instructional and other materials in schools, their impact on teaching quality and on students' achievements are less obvious.

Recent research has attempted to explain this paradox by focusing on 'process' rather than solely on 'input' factors (Carrón and Ta Ngoc, 1996; Dalin, 1994; Heneveld and Craig, 1996). In other words, and to give a simplified image of a complex reality, what matters, for instance, is not the number of textbooks provided to schools, but how they are being used in the classroom. The criticism of the massive interventions, mentioned above, is precisely that they have neglected these issues. To quote from an internal evaluation of several typical World Bank projects: their focus is on a number of factors such “as inputs, not on their integration within schools. (...) The project designs tend to ignore the process factors that characterize effective education within schools - school-level autonomy, school climate, the teaching/learning process, and pupil evaluation and feedback by teachers” (Heneveld and Craig, 1996, p. xiv). In order to get a clearer grasp of what
precisely is hidden behind the term ‘process factors’, Figure 1 was developed. It is based on IIEP research and summarizes the main factors influencing the quality of education. Three points are worth stressing: (i) at the core of education quality stands what happens in the classroom. The daily interaction between teachers and learners is the most direct determinant of school results; (ii) what happens in the classroom is, in turn, influenced by a set of relationships: relationships within school, between the school and the community, and between the school and the administrative level immediately above the school. Taken together this set of relationships can be called the ‘process factors’; (iii) basic input factors such as the infrastructure and equipment, the learners and the teachers are important aspects of school functioning but their impact on school results is mediated through these process variables.

Research on developed countries has arrived at comparable conclusions (OECD, 1994a). The concern with the quality of education grew in the 1980s when different studies and reports highlighted poor and deteriorating pupil achievement, notwithstanding relatively high investment in education and well-provided schools. “A nation at risk”, the title of the well-known USA report, provides a good summary of the mood. At first, many researchers looked for explanations in the pupils’ family background, arguing that schools suffered from the breakdown of social structures. But several studies have, in the meantime, shown that schools can and do have an effect on student achievement (see, among others, Mortimore et al., 1988). The question then became: how to render schools more effective?
Figure 1. The functioning of the school

Environment

Educational Administration

2. Relations with Administration

School

4. Relations within the School

Classroom:
Teacher-Pupil Interaction

5. Quality of the teaching force

6. Material teaching-learning conditions

7. Pedagogical conditions, including pupil composition

3. Relations with parents

1. Characteristics of the locality

Community

8. Teaching/learning process

9. Results

The changing context
How policy-makers have applied research

Increase schools' autonomy

This focus on schools has led to important reforms in the administration of education. In a number of developed countries, such reforms were placing a common emphasis on 'school autonomy'. They were fed both by the above-mentioned research results and by the prevalent ideological trend in favour of free market mechanisms. It was argued that, if interactions at school level are so crucial, then schools (i.e. headteachers, teachers, management boards) should be given the autonomy to decide which actions to undertake. Moreover, it was felt that parents should be given the freedom (and the information) to choose which school to send their child to. This competition between schools should, so the proponents of this model believe, lead to an improvement in the quality of schools, as it should lead to growing diversity and innovation in education, and because weaker schools would be forced through competition to improve (Clune and Witte, 1990; Chubb and Moe, 1990). These market-approaches to education have been applied most forcefully in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia and the USA, but have had some impact on most developed and, to a lesser extent, some developing countries (OECD, 1994b). Such reforms obviously have a vast impact on the roles and responsibilities of the different officers, including supervisors. Indeed, we will see that in, for example, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, supervision services have been deeply restructured, following school autonomy reforms.

In countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the trend towards a lesser degree of state planning and control, in education as in all other sectors, is also strongly present, and often proportionate to the constricting role played by the state before the political revolution of the early 1990s. Added to this is the need for these states to cut public sector staff. The countries concerned are therefore searching for a new definition of the tasks of the central authorities, including the Ministry of Education, which is changing "from a controlling to a co-ordinating body" (Kazakhstan MOE, 1995, p. 8). This again has repercussions for officers and actors at different levels, including schools, and in particular for an agency such as
the inspectorate, whose main function was precisely to exert control and to monitor the respect of centrally imposed decisions.

**Strengthen decentralization**

The fact that the school autonomy trend has had only limited bearing on most developing countries does not imply that these countries have not attempted any structural reform. On the contrary, in most, some form of educational decentralization has been implemented, with an evident impact on the responsibilities and authority of personnel at regional and local levels (for an overview of recent experiences in Latin America and Asia, see: Malpica, 1995; Govinda, 1997). In some countries, such decentralization was part of a conscious policy to reform education management, in many others it was more the result of an abdication by central government, which had no longer the finances nor the capacities to control and manage the whole system. Of course, decentralization and school autonomy should not be confounded. As demonstrated by a recent study carried out in 11 OECD countries, autonomy of schools can be less in contexts where important management authority has been devolved to lower levels of administration, while in others, e.g. the United Kingdom, increased school autonomy can be combined with some forms of recentralization (OECD, 1994a, p. 87). But on the whole it is true that, as a result of these multiple reforms, responsibilities of in-school actors (and in particular the headteacher) have increased in recent years in nearly all countries, including the developing ones. Schools are receiving more freedom in areas as crucial as the curriculum, staff management and financial management. It is clear however that, in particular in the less effective schools in developing countries, few headteachers have the skills or have received the training to efficiently use that extra freedom they have acquired. It is precisely in those situations that there exists an urgent need to rethink and strengthen supervision and support services.

In conclusion, the recent policy focus on school effectiveness has led to an increased interest in mechanisms of quality control. The various administrative reforms which have accompanied this new focus, and in particular the heavy emphasis put on school autonomy, has resulted in a
serious questioning of traditional supervision services. It has stimulated an interesting debate on how to redistribute responsibilities between different levels of action and how to organize a coherent system of professional support and control within this new management environment. The following parts of this review will reflect this ongoing debate.
II. COMPLEX STRUCTURES, MULTIPLE ROLES

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that some form of school supervision has existed as long as centrally organized education systems have been in place. Public authorities, who are financially responsible for education, have always felt the need to direct and monitor what is going on in schools.

Some background

A service with a long history

Most European countries set up their school supervision systems, generally known as the inspectorate or a similar term, in the nineteenth century. Those agencies have had a core responsibility in the development of modern education systems. Their task was not only to supervise the implementation of rules and regulations, but they also carried out functions such as advice, guidance, information and stimulation (Braaksma and Heinink, 1993, p. 209). That the ultimate objective of inspection was to improve education quality, is clear from the instructions given by the then Secretary of Education in England to the first Inspectors for Schools in 1839:

"It is of the utmost consequence that you should bear in mind that this inspection is not intended as a means of exercising control but of affording assistance; that it is not to be regarded as operating for the restraint of local efforts, but for their encouragement, and that its chief objects will not be attained without the co-operation of the school committees; the inspector having no power to interfere and being instructed not to offer any advice or information excepting where it is invited" (quoted by Singhal et al., 1986, p. 1).

These inspectors were members of what is probably the most famous supervision service, England's Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). It was

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2 Known at that time as the person in charge of the Privy Council's Committee on Education.
founded in 1834, before there even existed a separate government department for education, and became the model for quite a number of developing countries (Lawton and Gordon, 1987). Similarly, France's inspection system, whose background goes back even further, to the French revolution, has been copied by several of its previous colonies. Lyons and Pritchard (1976, p. 28) note that Algeria for instance "retains much of French inspection practice; Nigeria, Pakistan and Zambia on the other hand tend to follow English inspecting practice". In most countries, school support services, which include school visits in their job description, do not date back so far. In England, for instance, the first such service was created in 1902.

**The influence of politics**

Throughout their history, supervision services have undergone various changes, subject mainly to the political environment and to the wider reforms in education management. School and teacher supervision has indeed been a political and politicized issue in quite a number of countries, most visibly so in those where school inspectors once played a political role. In some of those countries, political change led to the abolition of inspection services, as their existence was considered contrary to the culture of a democratic society. Greece offers a good example. In 1974, inspection and control services were replaced by advice and support structures. Recently, however, inspection was re-established, in part as a result of a change in government, but also because a need for such an agency, in addition to a support and advice system, was felt. A similar evolution has occurred in, for instance, Guyana.

In South Africa the school was one of the main battlefields of the anti-apartheid struggle. Inspectors and, more surprisingly, subject advisers were seen as instruments of control and oppression. At the end of the 1980s, "through the teachers' defiance campaign, inspectors and subject advisers were refused access to schools and teachers, and teachers refused any form of evaluation of their and their schools' work" (Swartz, 1994, p. 1). However, this campaign did not imply a refusal of the principle of school supervision. On the contrary, once the pejorative political connotations of school
and teacher inspection disappeared, in the wake of the political change, “the very teachers who rejected the present system, initiated a new procedure and instrument for the appraisal of teachers” (ibid). The core elements of this new instrument are: “self-evaluation, peer review, consideration of contextual factors, and mediation, only in the event of conflict, by an inspector” (ibid). China, where for a long time school supervision was in the hands of the ruling party and had therefore an outspoken political character, created in 1988 a professional inspectorate, whose concern is mainly with education quality rather than with political correctness (Cheng, 1996, p. 117). In several well-established democracies, school and teacher supervision become subjects of political dispute at moments when the existing status quo is being questioned. To give one example, in France, the May 1968 conflict led to the creation among teachers of a *front contre l'inspection* (Ravier, 1992).

**The impact of management reforms**

Recently, education management reforms have had a more direct impact on school supervision, although even those management reforms are not without their political connotations. In the introduction, reference was made to the paradoxical trend, in particular in OECD countries, towards school autonomy, on the one hand, and recentralization of some responsibilities, on the other. The repercussions on school supervision, which is intrinsically an intermediate-level activity, have been profound. This issue will be discussed in more detail further on in this review, but a few examples can already be noted here. In the early 1990s New Zealand brought an end to school inspection as it was traditionally known. The School Inspectorate was abolished and replaced by the Education Review Agency. The role of this agency, which is an independent Department of the Public Service, is “to evaluate the performance of institutions and to make formal recommendations for better education in schools” (Cusack, 1992, p. 6). It is not involved in support and advice, nor with individual teacher appraisal, tasks left mainly to the school and the principal. The changes which took place in the United Kingdom are of the same nature,

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3 Advisers, known as researchers in teaching, existed already, both at provincial and county level.
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with the creation at the central level of OFSTED, the Office for Standards in Education. In most countries, these management reforms have left at least some formal inspection or support structure in place, but in a few, school supervision functions have to be taken care of at school level without relying on any formal external structure. In Finland, for instance, the level of autonomy of municipal authorities and schools is very high. The school boards, operating at municipal level, have the responsibility of defining the local curriculum, on the basis of national guidelines. Many schools have their own managing boards. The choice of textbooks and the setting of exams is the responsibility of the headteacher and staff. The ultimate responsibility for supervising public schools lies thus with municipal and county authorities, but actual supervision takes place through a complex system of school-level committees, on which teachers, parents, the principal and school administrators are represented (EURYDICE, 1995, p. 331). Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Malta are in a similar situation.

Complex structures

In quite a number of countries, these different - political and management inspired - reforms have not led to a simplification of the structures of education administration in general, and school supervision and support in particular. Rather, the opposite, as new agencies and actors have been added to the existing ones. There is little doubt that the organization of supervision and support services is complex, not to say intricate, in by far the majority of countries. There are different explanations for this.

Supervision at different administrative levels

First, in almost all countries, supervision services exist at each important level of the education administration: central, regional and local. The distribution of tasks between these levels is seldom clear. In a number of countries, e.g. France, the central level will concentrate more on 'system' evaluation, inter alia through the publication of thematic reports, while local-level supervision will be in charge of the 'raw' inspection work, which implies in particular the assessment of teachers. Thailand draws a distinction between inspection and supervision: the central level is mainly in
charge of inspection, i.e. monitoring the implementation of education policy. Two separate groups of inspectors exist at this level: the inspectors-general, who have their own department and focus on "the macro-picture of overall policies" and the inspectors, working within existing Ministry departments and who are "concerned with only the micro-view of policies related to their department" (Bamroongraks, 1996, p. 253). Supervision, understood as "the instructional improvement of schools and teachers" (ibid) is the task of both the central and regional levels and is carried out by supervisors. A smaller group of countries assigns fundamentally the same task of school supervision to officers at various levels. Kazakhstan is one example, but it is now evolving towards a similar system to that which exists in France. In Guinea, two different officers, respectively the Directeur pédagogique de l'enseignement élémentaire (based at the préfecture level), and the Directeur pédagogique de la sous-préfecture, can and do visit primary schools, for what is to all intents the same purpose (Martin and Ta Ngoc, 1993, p. 197).

Many other countries assign secondary and primary school supervision to regional and local officers respectively. This is the case for instance in many states in India, in Sri Lanka and in several countries of the European Union: "In large countries which are divided administratively into regions and districts, secondary inspectors are organized regionally, whereas primary inspectors are organized within districts. The amount of articulation between these levels is often negligible or non-existent. At the secondary level, inspectorates may be divided into academic, technical and vocational sections, operating independently of each other" (Hopes, 1992, p. 5).

**Supervising different types of schools**

Precisely this last factor, that different types of schools, and different subjects, will be supervised by distinct officers, offers a second explanation for the complexity of supervision structures. In almost all countries, primary and secondary school supervision function separately. Primary inspectors are usually generalists, while secondary inspectors are subject-area specialists. Few countries indeed employ subject specialists at primary level,
Zambia, in the 1970s, being one exception (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 24). Many countries assign special supervisors for specific groups of schools. In the Indian State of Tamil Nadu, for example, specific inspectors cover respectively all-girls schools, Anglo-Indian schools and the former 'panchayat union' schools (Singhal et al., 1986, p. 31). A similar approach exists in Uttar Pradesh, where different officers exist at different levels. As a result, a total of nine different types of inspectors play a role in the supervision of primary and secondary schools (idem, p. 42). The situation is generally less complex in European countries, but even there the existence of separate inspectorates for public and private schools, as, for example, in Belgium, adds to the confusion.

**Supervising different fields**

Officers will also be differentiated on the basis of their tasks, separating inspectors or supervisors from advisers. The example of Thailand has already been given. The Irish inspectorate, for instance, is composed of three sections: primary, post-primary (both essentially supervision agencies) and the psychological service (mainly a support agency). In several countries, including France and Spain, a further distinction is made between supervision of pedagogical and of administrative matters. In Guinea, a Directeur préfectoral de l'éducation has in principle more of an administrative task, while the above-mentioned Directeurs pédagogiques carry out more pedagogical functions. However, while in some countries the separation inspector-adviser reflects a real distinction in tasks, in a number of others, inspectors and advisers are simply different names for what are, at closer examination, officers with similar tasks. And even if both groups co-exist, both will advise as well as inspect.

**An unclear division of tasks**

It can be of little surprise that such complex multi-level structures lead to an unclear division of tasks and at times conflicting lines of authority. Two examples can highlight what is - as will be seen - a fundamental problem facing efficient supervision. In Bangladesh, three agencies are involved in supervising secondary schools: (i) the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education; (ii) the Directorate of Inspection and Audit; and (iii) the Boards
of Intermediate and Secondary Education. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education furthermore houses four groups of actors: the zonal deputy directorates, the district education offices, the zonal project officers, and the academic supervisors. These last two groups exist under a project, aimed at improving science supervision. The distribution of tasks between those three agencies and between the many officers is unclear. The fact that some staff belongs to permanent structures, while others were set up in the framework of a project, does not help co-ordination and coherence (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, pp. 44-45). In Tanzania, "the regional education officer is accountable administratively to the regional development director, politically to the regional commissioner, and professionally to the director of primary education. The district education officer is accountable administratively to the district executive director and professionally to the regional education officer. At the ward level, education co-ordinators, operating through powerful ward executive officers, provide pedagogical and supervisory support for schools in their wards and mobilize community resources, but they have no role in disbursing allocations from the central budget" (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p. 121). This intricacy and confusion is a reflection of the overall complexity of education administration, which is in many countries the result of compromises between centralizing and decentralizing trends, and between competing actors at each level.

Towards more autonomy

A further difference between countries, which has recently become more of an issue, relates to the status of supervision and support services, in particular the Inspectorate. Most of these services form an integral part of the Ministry of Education. A few, however, have achieved considerable autonomy. This has been the case, for a long time, for HMI in England, and OFSTED has adopted the same status. Actually, the whole school inspection landscape in England has changed radically, with schools being inspected by fully privatized teams, who have responded to government tenders and have been vetted by the national authorities. This is still an exceptional situation, but it will be seen further in this review that a trend towards more autonomy can be discovered in a larger number of countries.
Arguably, what is most striking when considering the history and present situation of school supervision and support services, is the endurance of the idea that school supervision is necessary and useful. Reforms, even the most profound ones, have never doubted that principle, but have aimed precisely at rendering supervision and support more efficient and more beneficial to the system, the schools and the teachers. With that in mind, the job description and working methods of supervisors were modified, and supervision structures underwent more or less significant revisions. The fact that throughout the ages, and in the face of many controversies, some supervision and support structure has continued to exist in most, if not all countries, is proof of its felt need. This is obviously an expression of the crucial roles it is supposed to play.

A demanding job description

But what precisely are those roles? How can one define a ‘supervisor’? The terminology used to identify supervision and support staff differs widely from one country to another. In some countries, the term inspector is considered too negative, too pejorative; hence supervisor, adviser, district education officer is used. The diversity in terminology and the complexity of supervision and support structures make it difficult to arrive at a definition of ‘supervision’ applicable to all countries. Rather than attempt such a definition, it is more useful to identify their most important functions and tasks. Indeed, it is fairly remarkable that the diversity in terminology does not hide a wide divergence in tasks.

Many countries explicitly recognize that supervision and support staff have to play three different roles: they supervise, they give support and they act as liaison agents between the lower and higher levels of administration. Several official documents, in for instance the Maldives (Maldives MOE, 1995), France (Perier, 1995), and Trinidad and Tobago (Harvey and Williams, 1991), explicitly assign these three tasks to their supervision staff. Each of these has two dimensions: a pedagogic and an administrative one. In principle, supervision and support should cover not only teachers, but also schools and the education system as a whole. The following matrix
tries to summarize these three core tasks, with their two dimensions (pedagogic and administrative) and in relation to the teacher, the school and the system. (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Core functions of supervisors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core functions</th>
<th>Pedagogic</th>
<th>Administrative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liaison agent</td>
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In the following paragraphs a more detailed presentation of the tasks will be made by examining different cells of this matrix.

**Supervision**

While in all countries the avowed overarching objective of school supervision and support is to improve the quality of education, most ministries of education will list, as their primary task, the monitoring of what goes on in schools. In Spain, for instance, the first function of the Inspectorate Service is to “ensure that the laws, regulations and any other legal dispositions of the educational administration are fulfilled in schools and services” (Alvarez Areces and Perez Collera, 1995, p. 163). In Thailand, as has been seen, two groups of inspectors exist whose task is almost exclusively to monitor the implementation of the Ministry’s policy. In nearly all countries, therefore, the foremost task of a supervisor is, not surprisingly, to supervise schools. That evidently implies school visits. Indeed, in many countries, a specific part of a supervisor’s job description details the number of school visits to be undertaken. In all Indian states, for instance, the norms prescribe that every school is inspected once a year and visited two to three times a year by the inspecting officer (Singhal, 1986, p. 22).
School supervision can, but does not necessarily, involve teacher inspection. A trend to assign teacher inspection to school heads and to request supervision staff to focus on school evaluation is spreading, and this will be commented on in more detail later. Certain other countries have long considered teacher inspection the prerogative of the school director. In Burundi, for example, "primary schools are grouped for administrative purposes into school directorships. One or more satellite schools are attached to a core school where the school director's office is located. Ministry policies require those directors to make 150 class visits per year and file written reports with the school inspectors on what they have observed" (Eisemon et al., 1992, p. 182). However, in several countries, including former French colonies, as well as Thailand, Russia and Japan, it remains the main task of especially local-level inspectors to mark teachers (Watson, 1994, p. 5247). In Germany, supervisors spend more than half of their working time on such teacher supervision. In an increasing number of countries, including France, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Mauritius, supervisors, especially at the central level, are becoming involved in the evaluation of the education system as a whole. Their wide on-the-ground knowledge and experience of what goes on in the classroom and the schools is a prime asset to them, when they are asked to evaluate specific innovations or problem areas.

Some countries separate administrative from pedagogical supervision. The examples of France, Spain and Guinea have already been quoted. However, such a separation, especially at school level, is difficult to sustain. "It is no simple matter to classify these duties neatly with those which are professional or educational and those which are managerial or administrative in nature. Clearly, an inspector in visiting a school, may well perform both kinds of duty, for example collecting statistical data or looking into problems of supply of materials or staffing and building problems and, in the same visit, inspecting the work of particular classes or teachers" (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 25). Investigations by IIEP some 20 years ago in Algeria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Venezuela and Zambia, showed indeed that all supervision staff during school visits performed both tasks, including in countries where separate staff existed for these tasks (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976).
Support and guidance

The same applies to a large extent to the separation between supervision, on the one hand, and what is the supervisor's second main job, support and guidance, on the other. It was noted before that, in many countries, there will be a division of tasks between an inspector, in charge of inspection and control, and a pedagogical adviser, in charge of support. However, this division is seldom crystal clear. There are indeed few inspectors who will refrain, while visiting schools, from offering advice. The above-mentioned IIEP research, and a more recent study on Bangladesh, Colombia and Ethiopia, have indeed shown that the external supervisor regularly provides pedagogical advice (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976; Dalin, 1994). Advisers, however, can hardly be expected to assist a school if they have not first made an assessment of its situation. Places as diverse as Italy, France, Malawi, the Maldives, the State of Uttar Pradesh, and Trinidad and Tobago, have all therefore assigned supervision and support to one and the same official. Malawi expects this official to give priority to teacher support, but without neglecting inspection (Bude et al., 1995, p. 132).

Liaison agents

In performing these core functions, supervisors are expected to play another equally important role. They are the main liaison agents between the top of the education system, where norms and rules are set, and the schools, where education really takes shape. As is inherent in a go-between, they have a double task: to inform schools of decisions taken by the centre; and to inform the centre of the reality on the school ground. This aspect of inspection was stressed at the 1956 International Conference on Education, where one recommendation said that "inspection should be considered as a service to interpret to teachers and the public the educational policies of the authorities and modern educational ideas and methods, and also to interpret to the competent authorities the experiences, needs, and aspirations of teachers and local communities (quoted by Pauvert, 1987, p. 48). In the words of a former Malaysian chief inspector: "their unique role is to act as the link between policy and practice, administration and feedback, research and evaluation" (quoted by Watson, 1994, p. 5249). This intermediary role has two dimensions: a pedagogic and an administrative
one. Pedagogically, they are expected to act as agents of change. They should identify and spread ideas about good practice, and in particular when reform programmes are set up by the centre, they must help in ensuring their implementation at the school level. They serve moreover as an administrative link, "to transmit the impulses emanating from central power to operative levels", which has been - according to an examination of the Costa Rican inspectorate - throughout the ages "the heart of the inspector's work" (Olivera, 1984, p. 3).

As if this job description is not yet sufficiently ambitious and complex, and precisely because supervisors are the chief (and in some countries the only) link between the centre and the schools, they are asked to play a role in in-service training, examination supervision, recruitment and employment of teachers and curriculum development. In France, the inspecteurs pédagogiques régionaux spend about one quarter of their time on teacher training, which, from this point of view, is their second most important task, after teacher inspection (Perier, 1995, p. 5).

The conflicting roles emerging from these different functions have been a constant source of preoccupation for the beneficiaries as well as for the organizers and providers of supervision services. They explain some of the difficulties which supervisors are experiencing in their daily work. But they are not the only ones, as will become apparent in Part III.
III. MAJOR PROBLEMS

Ultimately, the overarching objective of these multiple tasks and roles is the improvement of both the quality of teaching and the efficiency of the system. But - and this is a recurrent theme in nearly all countries, developed and developing, centralized or decentralized, with autonomous or tightly controlled supervisors - supervision and support services all too seldom achieve that objective. They are facing a certain number of difficulties in their functioning, which greatly reduce their efficiency and their ultimate impact on what is going on in the schools and in the classrooms. Some of the problems are as old as the supervision structures themselves; others are directly linked to recent changes in the ways in which school management is conceived.

A fairly long list of interrelated problems is discussed in the existing literature, which will be summarized under different headings. A first set of issues is related to the deterioration of the working conditions under which supervision services operate. Others have to do with more profound conflicts between the different roles which supervisors are asked to play. Finally, a number of difficulties derive from the way in which supervision services are managed and monitored.

Working conditions

The working conditions of supervisors are bad, from several points of view. Not only, as has been seen, do supervisors have many different tasks. These have lately become at the same time more overwhelming and more difficult to implement.

Lack of staff

Firstly their tasks have become more overwhelming, because the number of teachers and of schools to be inspected has increased dramatically during recent decades, while the number of inspectors has not been
following the same trend. Consequently, there is a lack of staff and inspectors complain that they have too many schools to supervise. Too much time and energy is spent in report writing and administrative duties, while, again, professional contacts with the teachers are being reduced to a minimum.

The situation was already giving cause for concern some 20 years ago: primary inspectors in Pakistan, Venezuela, Peru and Nigeria, respectively, were in charge of, on average, 150, 250, 300 and almost 400 teachers (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p.23). Since then, in many countries the situation has deteriorated. Lebanon, for instance, did not create any new inspection posts between 1967 and the early 1980s, but saw in the same period the number of teachers being multiplied by five (Aboumrad, 1983, p. 335). Several countries, moreover, do not fill all existing posts. In Bangladesh, in 1992, about 40 per cent of posts for secondary supervisors was left vacant. On average, one supervisor had responsibility for about 100 schools. Because of this high vacancy rate, the actual number is about 150 (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 45). This situation, surprisingly, also prevails in some developed countries, for instance Italy, where the secondary school inspection corps has never been fully filled, since its creation in 1974 (Hopes, 1993, p. 54).

Lack of means

Second, supervision tasks are becoming more difficult to implement: the daily functioning of supervision and support services seems to have suffered unduly from the economic and resulting financial crisis. It is very difficult to present hard financial data to prove this point, as the budgets of these services are generally subsumed in, for example, 'administrative spending' or 'financing of regional offices'. However, the effects of the financial squeeze are not difficult to perceive. Consequently, not only are there not enough inspectors, but because of successive budgetary cuts there is a lack of means for them to operate properly: they are badly paid, they have no means of transport, travel allowances are insignificant, etc. In a large country such as Niger, the allocation for fuel to travel in the country,
per inspector, is the equivalent of US$20 per month. On average one inspector is in charge of 50 schools and some 200 teachers. But in reality an inspector can only visit some 20 teachers per year, namely those that stay in schools which are close to the headquarters (Da Costa, 1994). The situation was not much better in Senegal, where “in 1985, only 28 vehicles served more than 600 staff in 41 regional directorates” and only slightly so in Kenya, where “with 225 vehicles for some 600 supervisory staff, inspectors rarely visit schools because of limited transportation, bad roads and bad weather” (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p. 121). This is a situation which is again not limited to the least developed countries. It exists also, undoubtedly on a different scale, in, for example, France: the inspecteurs pédagogiques régionaux complain about “the lack of space and poor equipment in terms of logistics (...) a lack of communication and editorial instruments (...) the absence of a public relations budget” (Perier, 1995, p. 4).

Absence in the most remote schools

This lack of material and human resources, combined with the lack of staff and the overload of tasks, results in the near absence of supervision staff in especially the most remote schools. Indeed, particularly in developing countries, where communication and transport problems add to the difficulties, many schools remain unvisited for a long time. The schools most to suffer are those which are isolated and probably most in need of supervision and support. Recent IIEP research on samples of schools in Madhya Pradesh in India, on Guinea, on Zhejiang in China and on Puebla in Mexico confirms this (Carron and Ta Ngoc, 1996). In Puebla, less than half the schools were visited more than three times during the year (Schmelkes et al., 1996, p. 84). In Guinea, more than 10 per cent of schools was never visited over the last year, not even by the Directeur pédagogique de la sous-préfecture, who is based closest to schools (Martin and Ta Ngoc, 1993, p. 197). The same situation seems to prevail in Madhya Pradesh (Govinda and Varghese, 1993, p. 89). In each of the four cases, the rural schools, and in particular the more remote ones, were worst off. At secondary level, the situation is generally better, because of the smaller number of schools and their more central location. But at this level also
there are significant problems. In Bangladesh, for example, a 1992 survey "found that on average a secondary school was visited 1.92 times over a five-year period" and a 1986 study "revealed that 7 per cent of the non-government and 33 per cent of the government schools were never inspected during a five-year period" (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 45). Still fewer of these visits cover all subjects, which could mean that some subject teachers might remain unvisited for the major part of their career. In a relatively well-endowed country such as Malaysia, about half of all science teachers had not received more than one supervision visit in the last two years, of which 10 per cent had not been visited at all (Bte Syed Zin and Lewin, 1993, p. 168).

Even district-based inspectors, it can be concluded from studies in, for example, Burundi, Thailand and Zaïre (Eisemon et al., 1992; Prouty et al., 1993) are not able to visit schools regularly enough for their interventions to have a significant impact on student learning. This is not really surprising, when one considers that the staff do not always live in the district where they work, but prefer a more developed town centre. Neither do they always have an office or a professional centre from which to organize their work (e.g. Bude, 1995, p. 137 on Malawi).

It would be incorrect to blame the neglect of supervision and support services by policy-makers fully on the existing scarcity of resources, resulting from the economic crisis. It would be equally incorrect to expect therefore that, should more funds be made available, their efficiency and competence would easily be improved. The development of a strong supervision system received little attention, even before the financial crisis struck. These services and officers indeed seem to be the victims of a more structural neglect, the result arguably of an under-estimation of their tasks. This structural neglect takes the form, on the one hand, of a cumbersome job description, characterized by internal conflicts and, on the other hand, of weak management of supervision services.
Role conflicts

Overload of tasks

Supervisors are faced with an overload of tasks. Not only do they have to fulfil the three core tasks mentioned earlier, but, being a sole intermediary, "the administrative organization automatically makes use of intermediate posts, and tries to fit into them every conceivable intermediate function" (Olivera, 1979, p. 51). Supervisors are thus used for all sorts of other jobs, some of which have little to do with supervision as such. Research on Mauritius lists 75 different activities which inspectors undertake "varying from registration of schools to more school-based, pedagogical activities" (Hurst and Rodwell, quoted by Lillis, 1992, p. 14). A study on Latin America concludes that "the resulting accumulation of duties in a single post is simply appalling" (Olivera, 1979, p. 51). This is a recurring complaint in research on supervision. It was previously noted, some 20 years ago, in IIEP research carried out on Algeria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Venezuela and Zambia and, more recently, in several studies, including one on India (Singhal et al., 1986, p. 10) and on countries of the European Union (Hopes, 1992, pp. 8-9). While these additional tasks might well be less crucial, they are often considered more urgent. The outcome is that relatively little time is spent on supervision. This seems to be the case for many developing as well as some developed countries. In the State of Haryana, supervisors spent approximately one third of their time on inspection and supervision, with some staff spending less than 10 per cent (Singhal et al., 1986, p. 10). In France, regional inspectors spend only between 25 and 50 per cent of their time on what they consider their most crucial task, school inspection (Perier, 1995, p. 5).

Tension between administrative and pedagogic duties

Furthermore, the work of inspectors has always been characterized by a number of tensions which are difficult to overcome. One, which is

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*To give some examples relating to India: "an inspecting officer is also required to serve as an election officer or a census officer. If floods have caused havoc, it is the school inspecting officer of the area who is asked to help in the flood control operations; and if there is a cyclone, it is he who has to place all his facilities at the disposal of the civic authorities for relief work" (Singhal et al., 1986, p. 10).
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becoming increasingly evident, concerns the intricacy of combining two different supervision approaches. There is, arguably, a need to offer tailor-made services on request to schools, which enjoy growing autonomy and demand specific supervision and support services. But this raises a conflict with the tradition of standardized services, as requested by the central bureaucracy.

Two more classical tensions have been commented upon more widely in the literature. The first one is between the supervisors' administrative duties and their pedagogical responsibilities. In many countries these tensions have increased because of the gradual deterioration of school functioning. When the system starts deteriorating, the need for pedagogical support becomes stronger, but at the same time inspectors have to invest more and more efforts in administrative control and problems of discipline. This is a real vicious circle which makes the work of inspectors increasingly more difficult and exposed to further criticism. In the study on school functioning in one of the States of India, Madhya Pradesh, it was found that 80 per cent of the visits of inspectors were routine inspections of an administrative nature, just to solve practical problems related to the day-to-day school functioning (Govinda and Varghese, 1993).

In the same way, in Bangladesh, “about 70 per cent of inspections have been concerned with granting/renewing recognition to schools, 15 per cent with inquiry into allegations, 10 per cent with academic supervision, and 5 per cent with other purposes” (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 45). Data on Trinidad and Tobago suggest that secondary school supervisors, when visiting schools, spend slightly more time on personnel matters (including teacher discipline) and plant matters (including construction, repairs, maintenance and security) than on programme matters (including curriculum, timetabling and student-related matters) (Harvey and Williams, 1991, p. 195). Indeed, when a choice needs to be made between administrative and pedagogic duties, the latter will suffer. But arguably, some supervisors might well prefer to focus on administration rather than pedagogy, as they have the power to take administrative decisions but, in the eyes of teachers, lack the authority to give pedagogic advice.
The situation is, in general, worse for developing countries than for the better-off ones. The latter can afford to employ several staff (e.g. for administrative as opposed to pedagogic supervision), so that the workload of each officer becomes less heavy and responsibilities much clearer. This however should not lead to the conclusion that, in the developed world, the situation is without problems. As noted, problems of task overload also crop up and these have led to grievances about the fact that little time can be spent on giving advice to schools and teachers (Christ, 1995, p. 133) and about the "ritual nature of inspection visits" (Hanriot, 1991). Hopes (1992, p. 21) summarizes as follows the results of research on several European countries: "their involvement in so many tasks and activities results in inspectors being seen too infrequently in schools in some countries. The frequency of visits then depends on how much time remains for inspection after other tasks with a higher priority set by the administration have been completed. This creates an image of a distant, inaccessible, administrator type and leads to a loss of credibility with teachers".

**Tension between control and support**

But even when supervision staff find the time for the more pedagogic tasks while visiting schools, the second tension between control and appraisal functions, on the one hand, and their support and development functions, on the other, remain. This second role-conflict is probably more serious than the first one and is a recurring theme in the literature. Criticism is voiced by teachers around the globe, that the merging of these distinct roles in one person perverts the relationship between the teacher and the adviser. This is not at all a recent issue. Since the inception of the first inspectorates, supervisors were asked to control and to assist. Studies, two decades ago, saw this tension as a fundamental weakness (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1974, p. 17; Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 13) and it remains a moot point in many countries from different regions of the world, including Malawi (Bude et al., 1995, p. 120), Malaysia (Jewa, 1991, p. 169), Trinidad and Tobago (Harvey and Williams, 1991, p. 197) and several European countries (Hopes, 1992, p. 20). As stated by an Israeli researcher: "his subordinates expect the supervisor to be a democratic leader (and give
them more autonomy in their role performance), and to behave professionally, as an instructor and guide; his superordinates expect him to be a benevolent leader, to use his formal authority and to be more bureaucratic" (Gaziel, 1979, p. 65). This role conflict is obviously a matter of concern in those countries where the inspector and the adviser is one and the same person. But even elsewhere, as mentioned earlier, the separation of tasks between these two actors is seldom clear-cut, and makes the relationship between the supervisor and teacher a rather ambiguous one. Manifestly the widespread trend towards more democracy, and the call for more participation and for greater school autonomy, which is characteristic of most education systems, has increased criticisms of the traditional inspection model and makes the combination of the control and support functions more and more difficult. Inspectors are often accused of demonstrating a bureaucratic authoritarian attitude which goes against the spirit of initiative expected from teachers within today's school management practices.

A gender dimension might also at times confound matters: while teaching staff are becoming feminized, this is not the case for supervision personnel. In the USA, less than 3 per cent of the school superintendency are women, even though at least a quarter of elementary principals and more than half of teachers are female (Farquhar, 1991, p. 160).

Many teachers are very sceptical about the beneficial impact of support and supervision by a superior: in a study on Australia, the first factor quoted as inhibiting professional development, was the "hierarchical supervisory structure" (Webb, 1991, p. 116). It should be noted that too often inspection has been a closed non-transparent exercise, while inspectors have not received proper training in human relations and communication which would allow them to sell their services better. This brings us to a third cluster of issues which are related to the way in which supervision services are managed.
Management of supervision services

Recruitment

Recruitment practices, for example, have often been subject to criticism. In most countries, experienced teachers are promoted to supervisory positions, on the basis of their seniority and experience as a teacher and, once in this position, remain there for the rest of their active life. The minimum number of teaching years required before promotion to supervisor differs from country to country: from three to seven years in Spain (Alvarez Areces and Perez Collera, 1995, p. 156), nine years in Italy (EURYDICE, 1991, p. 134) and 20 years in Venezuela (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 35). In many countries, having been a headteacher is another requirement. There is little doubt that teachers and heads appreciate the fact that supervisors have some real-life classroom experience. But questions have been raised about this procedure and its undesirable effects on the innovative capacities of inspectors and advisers. Olivera (1979) has noted a number of these effects within the Latin-American context: “there is little transfusion of fresh blood into the management body (...) Young teachers, especially when fresh from the university, arrive in schools full of new ideas, which cannot be properly adjusted to ‘realities’ when headmasters and supervisors are too out of touch for real dialogue to take place. Fruitful co-operation between theory and experience is then replaced by more or less polite hostility (...) The most common complaint is about the authoritarianism that creeps in” (p. 115). When promotion is based on seniority, it is not surprising that supervision staff on the whole is relatively old: in Bangladesh, for instance, 42 per cent of district education officers were in 1992 on the verge of retirement (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 14).

However, the alternative of appointing younger staff, with specific training for these posts, is not necessarily a solution to all these problems, as they in turn may lack the classroom experience, considered indispensable by most, if not all, teachers. Spain has tried to overcome the problem of
'bureaucratization and stagnation' by employing teachers on short-term (three-year) inspection contracts. However, "the alleged instability and wasteful nature of this model (given that the selection and training of inspectors involve too substantial an investment of time and cost to justify dispensing with and replacing inspectors at the very point when they have just managed to master the requirements of the job) led to a legal amendment, permitting these inspectors whose work has been positively evaluated by the appropriate education administration to remain in post indefinitely" (Alvarez Areces and Perez Collera, 1995, p. 159). A more intricate system, based on a similar principle, exists in South Korea. There, two career ladders exist, one going from 'newly appointed teacher' to 'principal', the other from 'associate teacher' over 'master teacher' to 'senior school supervisor/senior educational researcher'. Education staff can thus travel from the teaching profession ladder to the supervision ladder and back, without compromising their career (see Figure 2).

**Training**

Whatever the pattern of recruitment and promotion procedures, there is little doubt that advisers, inspectors and other such staff need regular training, and that they all too seldom receive it. This need for training has been recognized all through the history of supervision services and was already stressed, for instance, at the International Conference on Education in 1937: "no one should be appointed to the inspectorate who has not previously shown an interest in, and an understanding of general educational problems, either in a period of probation or by following a special course organized by a postgraduate institution" (quoted by Pauvert, 1987, p. 47). But pre- or in-service training programmes are still few and far between. A few interesting programmes exist in European countries. In Ireland, for instance, primary school supervisors pass through a probationary period of six months, during which they work together with experienced colleagues. At secondary level, this probationary period lasts two years, of which the first six months are spent at one college only. In Portugal, primary inspectors follow a one-year course, secondary inspectors, however, only a few theoretical courses, but they are supervised by more experienced colleagues at the beginning of their career (EU-
RYDICE, 1991, p. 134). On the whole, however, pre-service training in the European Union is considered “manifestly insufficient” (ibid). The same applies to in-service training and, as a result, one notes an absence of reflection on the objectives and methods of supervision, which is deplored by supervisory staff themselves (Hopes, 1993, p. 59). The situation is certainly no better in most developing countries, which are in want of a well-organized system both to prepare supervision and support staff for their role, and to keep them up to date.

**Professional support**

In addition to training, the performance of a supervisor will also depend, to a large extent, on the quality of the professional support instruments which are put at his/her disposal. Two such instruments of particular importance are supervision guides or manuals, and the availability of a regular database to prepare and monitor the supervision work. Even if it is true that most countries have prepared pro-forma supervision reports, this most basic instrument is not available everywhere. More sophisticated, and more useful, instruments are far less prevalent. Few countries, for instance, have prepared a manual, clear guidelines or a code of conduct for inspection visits. A number of Indian states (Andra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu among others) have developed inspection codes and candidates for inspection posts are tested on their knowledge of this code (Singhal, 1986, p. 75). Nigeria, Pakistan and Zambia developed, in the 1970s, a similar instrument, either in the form of a handbook or of notes, while a few international handbooks exist, prepared for example by the Commonwealth (Hughes, 1981). The Maldives, more recently, elaborated the first version of a “manual of guidelines and instructions for ministry and school-based supervisory staff” and the Minister of Education has expressed the wish that more detailed “guidelines for school supervision should evolve through professional discussion and consensus, rather than being imposed by administrative directives” (Maldives MOE, 1995, p. 1). Mauritius, in the framework of its master plan for education, is planning to develop a similar handbook. Probably the most useful and complete set of supervision tools exist in the United Kingdom, where OFSTED has produced a detailed Handbook (OFSTED, 1993) and Framework (OFSTED, 1994b), which
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contains for instance a very detailed inspection schedule. The documents proved to be useful for inspectors as well as schools and teachers, who can better prepare themselves for the forthcoming visits. Such a situation is, however, exceptional. In most countries, the reality might well be closer to that of Bangladesh where, for a long time, school supervisors have had no code, manual, or handbook for guidance, except the Bengal Education Act 1931, which "apart from being obsolete, is no longer available" (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 46).

One more expression of the policy neglect of supervisors manifests itself in the almost complete absence of an appropriate database concerning the performance and quality of schools and teachers. Indeed, very few supervisors have indicators at their disposal, which should allow them to select needy schools and teachers for a more intense monitoring and to prepare themselves for their visits. The literature contains little information in this respect. One example highlights the situation in England, in 1990/91, thus before the most recent changes, and concerns staff working in local education authorities (LEA). Out of a total of 18 indicators identified as useful by a team of researchers, only one was available to more than three quarters of LEAs: public examination results. Just over half of LEAs had information on two other indicators: post-16 destinations and attendance. A total of 12 indicators was available to only 10 per cent or less of LEAs: these included indicators on staff characteristics, relations with parents and in-school student evaluation (Gray and Wilcox, 1994, pp. 72-73). Very few supervisors, as is the case for the German inspectors, "have access to a wide range of statistical data - for example on destinations after primary school, the percentage of children repeating a class, the number of educationally disadvantaged children in each institution, and socioeconomic data on the school population" (OECD, 1995, p. 92). This absence of information on schools is even more deplorable, when it is realized that supervisors play a role in many countries in collecting data, only to send them immediately through to the central authorities. (See Figure 3).
Figure 3. Supervision career ladder in South Korea

Source: OFSTED, 1994 d.
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**Reporting and follow-up**

A final issue in the management of supervision services has to do with the feedback of information gained through school visits into the system. How is the reporting of supervisors' visits organized? What are the objectives of the different reports? With whom are they discussed before and after finalization? How is adequate follow-up action being ensured? Who is involved in this follow-up? etc. The answers to these questions are crucial if one is to understand the degree of efficiency of a given supervision system and its real impact on the quality of the education system. It may therefore seem surprising that the issue of reporting and follow-up has received so little systematic attention. This lack of follow-up has several dimensions: too few supervisors provide an immediate feedback on their findings to the teachers and schoolheads; they give equally little attention to following up on their supervision, either by giving special attention to a particular school or by informing the authorities of a particular issue. “The lack of systematic feedback to decision-making centres, who are then ignorant of what has happened or is happening, or only know about them in a general way, without precise information or analysis of interaction” was noted in Costa Rica as a major deficiency (Olivera, 1984, p. 78). Indeed in most countries, supervisors are only expected to file a number of reports after their visits. Very little research has been undertaken on what the recipients do with those reports, but one can suppose that they are seldom acted upon. There is further scope for a more structured form of follow-up when, as is the case in Andra Pradesh, supervisors “record their remarks and suggestions for further improvement in the Inspection Book kept in the schools” (Singhal et al., 1986, p. 37). But follow-up also supposes that supervisors regularly visit those schools in need, and this - as was mentioned - is all too rarely the case. Added to this is the lack of contact between supervisors and the different departments or centres which play a role in policy formulation and implementation (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 31).

A further complicating factor which makes proper follow-up action difficult is that supervisors, advisers, subject inspectors, general inspectors and other education officers rarely work together or inform each other of the results of their visits and of their reports. This is partly a result of the
confusing structure and organization of the system and its different units, as mentioned earlier. In the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, for example, it was noted that "officers who are in direct contact with the field have no authority for initiating necessary action and those who have the authority have no time for capturing the field-level reality" (Govinda and Varghese, 1993, p. 75). But there are at least two other reasons. "Inspectors as individuals appear to enjoy considerable autonomy, which (...) leads to a certain degree of isolation (...) and has the disadvantage of eroding the basis of working in a general, coherent direction" (Hopes, 1992, p. 21). But the services and agencies themselves jealously guard their autonomy and power. This was the prime reason why attempts to create a unified service in Spain in the 1970s failed (Alvarez Areces and Perez Collera, 1995, p. 157).

The teachers' view

In view of the above-mentioned sobering set of interrelated problems, it can be of little surprise that most studies demonstrate that, at present, the impact of supervision and support on classroom teaching and on student achievement is far below expectation. Some data from recent IIEP research can highlight the level of dissatisfaction among teachers. In Guinea, teachers, when asked their opinion about the utility of different sources of professional support, placed visits by the different categories of supervisors at the bottom of the list, below, in decreasing order of importance, personal reading, teachers' pedagogical meetings, discussions with colleagues, support by the principal, model lessons and in-service training (Martin and Ta Ngoc, 1993, p. 204). The situation was only slightly better in Madhya Pradesh, where 55 per cent of teachers thought that inspectors were of no or little benefit and only 8 per cent considered them to be of very much help. Headmasters and colleagues were seen to be of very much help by respectively 22 and 24 per cent (Govinda and Varghese, 1993, p. 160). In Puebla, in Mexico, only about 10 per cent of teachers considered that they received strong pedagogical support from supervisors (Schmelkes et al., 1996, p. 85). It is important to note that there was relatively little difference in opinion between the teachers in the different zones, from the developed urban to the marginal rural.
Equally significant is that this dissatisfaction is shared by many teachers in better-off countries, with better organized and resourced supervision systems. In Australia, for example, significant numbers of teachers were of the opinion that “they were being developed more through informal means, team teaching or co-operative planning with a fellow teacher” (Webb, 1991, p. 116). In New Zealand, the partial disappearance of inspectors, following the recent management reforms, was well received by teachers: “the absence of an inspectorate also gave teachers greater scope for innovation and creativity rather than needing to comply with the accepted data and official wisdom. As such, local self-management facilitated quality teaching” (OECD, 1994b, p. 86). While these different studies show, on the one hand, teachers' dissatisfaction with the work done by inspectors and advisers, they also indicate that these same teachers feel the need for an efficient system of supervision and support, both from within and outside the school.
IV. REFORMS AND TRENDS OF CHANGE

As indicated in this review, in nearly all countries support and supervision services, organized in one form or another, have existed since central authorities began to organize the school system. The avowed objective of these services is to improve school effectiveness and teaching quality. But these services, wherever they exist, have a number of weaknesses, some of which are the consequence of the financial crisis, while others seem ingrained in the present system. These weaknesses have made it difficult for these services to attain their crucial objective: to improve on the quality of education.

In the light of this, it is hardly surprising that numerous countries have attempted, at different times, to improve on or reform the existing services. For reasons explained earlier, in recent years the attention to supervision and support services has grown, after a period of neglect. Hopes (1992, p. 14) has noted that changes in the inspectorates are taking place in more than half of the member countries of the European Union. An evaluation of a number of recent World Bank basic education projects revealed that 'supervision' was one of the two factors, together with 'teacher development', covered by most projects (Heneveld and Craig, 1996, p. 42). In many countries, policy-makers have only tinkered with the existing system, but in an increasing number these changes have taken the form of real reforms.

The purpose of most of these reforms is to bring supervision closer to where the action is taking place, that is to say to the school-site level. In certain instances, new support-oriented services are being created (resource centres, clusters, learning co-ordinators, etc.) somewhere in between the school and the regional or district administration. The emphasis of this type of reform is still on improving the efficiency of external support structures by increasing their proximity to the beneficiaries. In other cases, the objective is explicitly to render external support expendable or, at least, to limit drastically its role by shifting the
focus of monitoring quality directly to the school site. In general, this development of monitoring at school level covers three complementary phenomena: a shift in the responsibility of supervision to the headteachers; a greater reliance on self-monitoring by the teaching staff; and the increased involvement of the community.

For the sake of clarity, each of these two types of reform will be analysed separately, although in reality they are often combined and reinforce each other. At the same time, these reforms are usually introduced as part of a broader effort to improve the overall supervision system or they do, at least, affect the way in which the whole system (including classical external supervision) operates. It is therefore possible to identify some broad trends of change which cut across different forms of supervision, and these will also be discussed.

**Bringing supervision closer to the schools**

There exist in principle two ways of shortening the distance between schools and supervisors, which now renders the work of many supervisors so irrelevant to the school and the classroom: (i) one can bring the administration closer to school by creating, under the level which is presently closest to school, another level of supervision and support staff; (ii) the other can also bring schools closer to the administration, by assembling them into clusters and around resource centres. Both strategies are manifestly not mutually exclusive and an increasing number of countries have tried out or are trying out either one or both. As with so many of the issues and strategies discussed in this review, this one is not completely new. But it is becoming a more popular one, if not among countries, at least among researchers.

**New tiers of supervision at lower level**

Bangladesh created in 1980 a new tier of officials, called the assistant Upazilla education officers, who have quickly become the main linkage between schools and the administration. Their creation has improved the ratio of schools to supervisors from 100 to 20. These officers "visit the
schools at least twice a month, once for school-based teacher training and once for general supervision" (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p. 131). The creation of these officers was seen by some authors as a core strategy in the success of efforts to improve schools in Bangladesh (Dalin, 1994). Bangladesh has more recently, in the framework of the Secondary Science Education Sector Project, strengthened secondary school supervision and support, by appointing zonal officers and academic supervisors, based at zonal level (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 117). Another well-known example concerns Pakistan, which in 1979 introduced the position of learning co-ordinators, who have to visit some 10 to 20 schools per month. This scheme, at the early stage of its implementation, proved to have quite a number of benefits: "a significant reduction in teacher absenteeism; improvements in the quality of teaching; increased enrolment and better attendance by students; an opportunity for teachers to discuss their problems with persons not primarily concerned with administration; a greater sense of professionalism among teachers; the use of co-ordinators as substitutes for missing teachers; better communication from district management to the schools" (Warwick et al., 1992, p. 298). A comparable strategy exists in, for example, Bermuda, where these professionals are called 'peripatetic resource teachers' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991, p. 19), in Myanmar, with its assistant township education officers, and in Lao, while its introduction is planned in, for example, Malawi. In those two latter countries, this is being accompanied by the creation of school clusters, which will be discussed below in more detail.

While the many benefits noted in Pakistan were not present everywhere, there is little doubt that this strategy improves school functioning, in particular, it seems, through decreasing teacher absenteeism. It is, however, not without risks. It demands more precisely a fairly heavy investment, to ensure that the new tier of officials can perform efficiently. One might wonder, if there were not enough resources available to strengthen existing supervisors, why create a new structure? One major problem in Bangladesh was precisely the lack of transport for the assistant Upazilla education officers. In Pakistan, a different issue arose, that of jealousy and rivalry between the learning co-ordinators, on the one hand, and, on the other
hand, "incumbent district education officers, who felt that their authority was being undermined, and supervisors, who did not receive the special allowances and motorbikes", given to the learning co-ordinators (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p. 131). Their integration into the existing administrative structures, however, has now led the learning co-ordinators to lose their original character and to become just another group of supervisors, encountering similar obstacles.

**School clusters and resource centres**

School clusters, as a rule, group neighbouring schools around a larger core school. They are generally combined with teacher resource centres, based at the core school. Both clusters and resource centres exist in an increasing number of countries. Their objectives are twofold: firstly to improve teaching by sharing resources, experience and expertise among staff; and secondly, to facilitate administration and to gain from economies of scale. Reference has already been made to Burundi, where most schools are satellite schools and where the core school director has the explicit task of supervising classroom teaching in all the cluster schools (Eisemon et al., 1992, p. 182). In Cambodia, this task is assigned to a chairperson, who also has to gather information to be submitted to the district officer and who presides over cluster meetings, e.g. on teacher promotion. "In each cluster, there is a resource centre used as a training centre for working teachers, as a meeting centre for headmasters and teachers. These centres are the stores of all sorts of data and information gathered from all schools" (ACEID, 1996, pp. 250-251). Similar school clusters exist in most of Latin America and also, among other countries, in India, Malawi, Myanmar, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Bray, 1987; De Grauwe and Bernard, 1995; Hoppers, 1996).

Some countries have not formalized the cluster structure as such, but have teacher resource centres, which service the schools in the neighbourhood. This is the case in Botswana, Belize, the Gambia and Tanzania (Commonwealth, 1991, p. 21). Malaysia is elaborating a rather intricate structure, with State Educational Resource Centres at the state level, Teacher Activity Centres, catering for some 20 to 50 schools, at the
district level, and School Resource Centres at each school (Aziz, 1996). In Lao, the setting up of a network of teacher-upgrading centres in the most disadvantaged provinces was accompanied by the creation of a team of primary teacher educators and the promotion of a regular monitoring and supervision system. District education officers and supervisors, based at the teacher upgrading centre, were given specific supervision training. These supervisors have to visit schools for 20 days per month, and this regular supervision and support is seen as a main reason for the programme's beneficial impact on the education system (ACEID, 1996, pp. 103-105).

As mentioned above, school clusters can have a pedagogic and/or administrative objective. Neither are their origins the same everywhere. In most countries, they are the result of government initiative, but in a few, for example Zimbabwe, they have come about spontaneously, because schools and teachers felt the need to meet and exchange resources and information (Hoppers, 1996, p. 8). An interesting example is Mozambique, where clusters were first launched in the 1970s by teachers and were revived recently by the central administration. Clusters, known as Zonas de Influência Pedagógica (ZIP), "were initiated by teachers in the wake of independence as an emergency administrative arrangement, that would assist in the payment of teachers' salaries and the distribution of educational materials as well as in the exchange of pedagogical experiences. (...) Formalized by the Ministry of Education in 1976 and run by elected representatives of the teachers, they were part of the early experimentation with democratized school management structures. ZIPs became the teachers' instrument for self-help as regards their material and social interests, as well as their pedagogical needs. (...) In later years, the ZIPs lost much of their high profile. After 1977 they first had to hand over their administrative functions to the newly established district administration, while after 1983 their influence on pedagogical matters was much undermined by the development of a cadre of pedagogical experts (pedagogical support commissions) in provincial education directorates. The role of ZIPs became gradually reduced to that of 'discussing education matters' and imitating messages from the experts" (Hoppers, 1996, p. 4).
But in the 1990s, the Ministry developed a new policy, promoting decentralization and teacher development. This has led to "an interest in revitalizing the ZIPS, many of which had ceased to exist. A 1995 circular by the Ministry set the tone by describing the new ZIPS as pedagogic units of teachers aimed at the development of teacher competencies, improvement of educational quality, and dissemination of pedagogical experiences. ZIPS will be used for in-service teacher training, and as a mechanism for enhanced inspection and supervision of teachers. Although teachers participate in management, the activities will be controlled by the schoolheads and the district education directorates" (ibid, p. 5).

Reinforcing monitoring at the school site

The disappointing performance of many supervision services has led to the prospect of abandoning external supervision and support, or at least of seriously limiting its role, by placing emphasis on in-school quality monitoring devices. Only very few countries have actually implemented such profound reforms. This review already referred to New Zealand and England, where inspection was recently replaced by a central agency, respectively the Education Review Agency and the Office for Standards in Education, whose main task is to inspect all schools once every four or five years, while all other supervision and support functions (including teacher inspection) are left to the school, its headteacher, its governing board or its staff. Supervision without an external inspection service already exists in the Scandinavian countries and in Iceland. In Denmark, primary schools are not visited by external authorities. The school plans have to be approved by the municipal council, but monitoring is done mainly through the school council, the headteacher and the staff itself. The school council, whose members are for the most part parents, decides on the timetable, approves the budget and the didactic materials. The headteacher is responsible for the school’s administration and will observe classroom teaching only in the case of new teachers or those who have particular problems. Each private school however has attached to it an inspector chosen by the parents or appointed by the municipality (EURYDICE, 1991, p. 59; Weng, 1995, pp. 141-142).
Reforms and trends of change

However, even those countries where supervision and support services have survived without too many problems are putting an increasing emphasis on in-school or community-based forms of monitoring. There are some good reasons to promote in-school supervision and support. Many basic problems which schools, mainly in underprivileged areas, are facing – such as pupil and teacher absenteeism, difficult relations with parents, problems of maintenance of school buildings – can only be properly monitored at the school level. Occasional visits by inspectors cannot solve these problems and cannot stop the gradual deterioration of the daily school functioning. This decentralization of control to the school level also involves a change in the approach to quality improvement. So far, too many programmes for quality improvement have been imposed on teachers and have therefore failed. In the end it is the teacher, together with the headteacher, who has to deliver the goods. Without their commitment, very little happens and that commitment cannot easily be obtained by external control or imposition, it has to come from internal conviction. Consequently, there is a shift in many countries from a quality control to a quality assurance strategy. In other words, there is a growing conviction that teachers should be encouraged and empowered to assure for themselves the quality of the services which they have to deliver.

The prevalence of in-school supervision

The following paragraphs will look at how far in-school supervision and support really takes place and, if it does, what its impact on teaching quality seems to be. The evidence on in-school supervision is varied. In some countries, observing and supervising primary-school teachers is indeed a formal task of the schoolheads. Burundi, China and New Zealand are some examples. In the Maldives, the task of supervising primary teachers is shared between the principal, the assistant principal, the senior supervisor and the assistant supervisor. Such a situation is clearly more difficult to imagine in countries where schools in the rural areas do not even have four teachers. In many more countries, it is informally expected of the headteacher that he or she will, if necessary, supervise the teachers in their classrooms. But in some (e.g. France), classroom supervision is simply not part of the headteacher's job.
In any case, there is little evidence to show how far in-class supervision actually takes place. Studies on Zaire and Burundi suggest it to be a regular phenomenon (Prouty et al., 1993). A study on a sample of schools in Guinea is less clear: depending on the school's environment, from 50 to 70 per cent of teachers had received nine or more visits by their director over the last year. But it was also noted that between 15 to 40 per cent of teachers were not even observed once (Martin and Ta Ngoc, 1993, p. 200). The situation is comparable in the Mexican province of Puebla (Schmelkes et al., 1996, p. 61). Some evidence points to an even greater lack of supervision. In the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh, "classroom visits by the headmaster are not a common phenomenon; in fact, some teachers did not even approve the practice. It may be noted that in many government schools there is no headmaster with official designation and authority, which makes it difficult for any kind of supervision to take place" (Govinda and Varghese, 1993, p. 88). Research in Zimbabwe equally found that heads rarely observe teachers, on average less than twice a year, and about 60 per cent of all teachers were dissatisfied with such supervision (Chivore, 1994, pp. 290-292).

Very little research has been carried out on peer supervision, but it is most probably still less common. Some states in the USA are experimenting with such an approach. One is the New York State Quality Review, a programme whereby a dozen teachers from other schools review a school for about a year, including through a one-week evaluation mission in the school, "watching lessons, meeting the principal, teachers, parents, pupils and community representatives, and looking at students' written work. The review team acts as 'critical friends', aiming at understanding the school's operations well enough to identify its strengths and to suggest how they might be built on. (...) The aim is to stimulate a culture of permanent reflective self-appraisal; after the year of external review, each school spends four years in a self-review process, and then the cycle begins again" (OECD, 1995, p. 141). Internal evaluation does not come about easily everywhere, as is evident in France, where a recent policy to stimulate self-evaluation in schools was considered by a report on a sample of 20 schools to have been a 'complete failure' (OECD, 1995, p. 77). It is unclear, however, in how far this failure was the result of resistance against the concept itself or of the way it was being implemented in schools.
The prevalence of in-school support

There is certainly greater clarity regarding in-school support (as opposed to supervision as such). Informally, such support exists probably in all schools (except in one-teacher schools), with teachers discussing among themselves or through staff meetings. Some examples can be given of more formal models. In Madhya Pradesh, some teachers are identified, during a teacher training programme, as potential core group teachers. They will have to provide continuous support to their colleagues in their school or cluster. This strategy forms part of a more comprehensive ‘Teacher Empowerment Project’ (ACEID, 1996, pp. 355-357). The Maldives has recently set up, at secondary level, subject teacher committees. These meet formally at least once a term, to discuss problems and share experiences. Regularly, external supervision and support staff takes part in such meetings (Maldives MOE, 1995, pp. 29-31). At secondary level, such formal structures are indeed easier to organize, in particular when they concern one subject, and they probably exist in one way or another in most countries. Some countries, to promote internal support, provide all schools with a resource centre for teachers. Zambia, as part of the Self-Help Action Plan for Education, is one example; Malaysia another. Where such resource centres serve more than one school, one comes back to the school clusters, as described in detail above, and which one could call a form of ‘in-between school’ support.

The impact of in-school supervision and support

Just as there exists some discussion about the prevalence of in-school supervision, there is some debate about its impact, in particular when compared to external supervision. Prouty et al. (1993, p. 16), on the basis of research in Burundi, Thailand and Zaire, conclude that “to be effective, teacher supervision must be a school-level responsibility” and that it “should be an explicit part of the principal’s mandate. (...) District-level personnel, it seems, should be encouraged to provide principals rather than classroom teachers with direct support”. The HEP case studies on Madhya Pradesh (Govinda and Varghese, 1993, p. 160) and Guinea (Martin and Ta Ngoc, 1993, p. 204) show that teachers are of the opinion that they draw more benefit from support by the headteacher and discussions with colleagues.
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than from external supervision and support. In Madhya Pradesh, such internal support is also more appreciated than the benefit drawn from personal reading, but in Guinea personal reading scores highest. Research on secondary schools in Bangladesh (Bangladesh MOE, 1992, p. 47) and a small sample of schools in Australia (Webb, 1991, p. 116) also show more satisfaction with supervision by headteachers than by external actors.

But other authors express some reservations. The fact that certain principals do not engage in regular classroom observation or teacher supervision is not only a result of lack of interest in, or competence for, this task. Other factors play a role, some of which are similar to the ones which obstruct efficient external supervision. Headteachers are already faced with an overload of duties, including administrative ones, for which they are poorly prepared (Dadey and Harber, 1991). When given the task of inspecting teachers, a conflict with their role of offering pedagogic guidance easily occurs. Such problems are probably more acute in developing than in developed countries. Lyons and Pritchard (1976, pp. 28-29) therefore warned against copying a strategy, which might be useful in the context of developed countries, to “a situation where heads and teachers are often under-trained, the conditions in the schools often handicap teachers and pupils, and where the need for regular and thorough assessment and help is all too evident”. Headteachers, themselves, even when sufficiently trained, do not necessarily accept the responsibility of supervision: in New Zealand, some principals “expressed concern at ‘the buck stops here’ obligations of their new roles, and have acknowledged the loss of the school ‘back-up person’, the former liaison inspector from the local authority” (Cusack, 1992, p. 8). In secondary schools, some other issues play a role. Headteachers cannot easily give subject-related support to all teachers. In Malaysia and Morocco, for instance, respectively only 22 and 5 per cent of the headteachers are former mathematics or science teachers. It is true that they can be assisted in giving leadership in, for example, science education by senior science teachers or subject coordinators, but the evidence of research on Malaysia and Morocco shows that this staff, for different reasons, seldom plays that role efficiently (Caillods et al., 1997).
None of this implies that in-school supervision and support is impossible or futile. It rather shows that it cannot be taken for granted and - more precisely - that external supervision and support remains in most cases necessary to strengthen the impact of school-based strategies. Moreover, for headteachers to offer useful supervision and support, many will need to receive specific training. Such training already takes place in several countries. A programme in Lesotho combines this with teacher in-service training, whereby the heads are assigned the specific task to mentor one of the untrained teachers taking part in the parallel programme (Heneveld and Craig, 1996, p. 32). Various manuals for school staff focusing on or including supervision have been produced, for example by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993), in the Maldives (1995) and in Bermuda.

**Supervision by the community**

A complementary strategy of supervision involves relying on the 'community'. This trend, still in its early stages, can be found in two very distinct groups of countries: one where the government has willingly abandoned supervision, as part of an overall pro-market approach; a second where, in the remote rural zones, the poor quality of teaching and the almost complete absence of external supervision and support has led the community to take the initiative. Countries where an explicit transfer of responsibilities from the central to the local or school level has taken place, have generally created school management boards or development committees. The examples of England and New Zealand have been cited. One can also note that in the European Union in general, parents' participation in school matters, via a parents' committee, has increased over the past decade, although few such committees are assigned specific formal supervision tasks (EURYDICE, 1991, pp. 119-121).

In the very contrasting second group of countries, communities have started organizing themselves in order to exert certain monitoring functions and to control informally the functioning of the school, at least from an administrative point of view. They make sure that the facilities are there, that pupils attend, that teachers teach. There is an interesting phenomenon in Mali, for example, called *les écoles de base*, where local
communities simply create their own schools and monitor them themselves. Somewhat similar models exist, for example, in Egypt (Egypt MOE, 1993) and Chad (Esquieu and Péano, 1994). But these are small-scale experiences, and the same obstacles which render community participation in general so difficult, are also prevalent. That even in the most 'educated' societies, parents are not automatically interested in intervening in school monitoring, can be highlighted by the fact that in England, when parents get the opportunity to meet with inspectors after their school evaluation, only between 2 and 25 per cent of those eligible attend (OFSTED, 1994a, p. 20).

**General trends of change**

Although the reforms identified above do not all point in the same direction, a number of converging trends can be identified in particular, but not exclusively, in developed countries.

**A more coherent job description**

The first trend is to arrive at a more limited and at the same time more coherent job description for supervisors. This implies a reduction in the role conflicts mentioned earlier by de-linking control from advice functions and separating administrative from pedagogic tasks. Several authors have made recommendations in that direction, on a general level (e.g. UNESCO/PROAP, 1991, p. 209), or in relation to one particular country (e.g. Swartz, 1994, p. 57 on South Africa). This advice is not exactly new. The 1956 International Conference on Education recommended that the supervisor "be relieved of the more routine official tasks that so often absorb a large part of his time" (quoted by Pauvert, 1987, p. 49), while Olivera (1984, p. 75), on the basis of the experience of Costa Rica, advised that "a distinction should be made between pedagogic advisers and administrative inspectors: the former to be active in school districts, while the latter, in lesser numbers, could act at the regional or subregional level".

Several countries have attempted, or are attempting, to separate supervision from support roles. South Africa, Malawi, Chile, France, Germany and several states in the USA, among others, request their supervision staff
to focus more on giving support, and thus to play a developmental role. In Peru, as long as 20 years ago, special technico-pedagogic adviser posts were created at the levels of regions, zones and nuclei, whose focus was on giving support and support alone. About the same time, similar changes occurred in Venezuela and Costa Rica (Olivera, 1979, p. 110). In the framework of the Chilean '900 schools programme', supervisors were given specific training, so that they could adopt the role of pedagogical guides in the schools. This change from inspector to adviser was well appreciated by almost all supervisors (Flip, 1993, p. 37). In a few other countries in which school-based management practices have been recently introduced, New Zealand and the United Kingdom in particular, a similar separation between control and support is taking place. But in those cases the shift is towards more control for the external supervision services, while support and advice tasks are supposed to be handled directly at school level as part of an overall quality assistance approach. It was mentioned already that the newly established Education Review Agency in New Zealand will not play any role in support and advice, but will be concerned mainly with monitoring schools (Cusack, 1992, pp. 6-7). The comparable reforms in England and Wales are in part “designed to separate out the functions of inspection and advice, by prohibiting anyone who has had a close professional relationship with a school from participating in an OFSTED inspection” (OECD, 1995, p. 61). The OFSTED teams, who visit schools, are there mainly for inspection. The new system thus represents “a shift in emphasis from supporting schools to monitoring their performance”, as it is being funded “by a reduction in resources available to local authorities who traditionally have employed advisory as well as inspection teams” (ibid, p. 56). Some authors note a link between an increased stress on accountability and a trend towards control in school supervision (Grimmett and Crehan, 1992, p. 68).

Equally important are the efforts made to de-link administrative from pedagogic tasks, so as to allow supervision staff to concentrate on what is crucial rather than merely urgent. Mauritius, in its Master Plan for Education, foresees indeed that a separate category of staff will be responsible for purely administrative matters (Mauritius MOE, 1991, p. 29). In Spain, a similar redefinition of functions has taken place: “various factors connected
with the strengthening of educational administration have tended to eliminate from the Inspectorate many central and long-standing features of their profession, namely planning, distribution of materials, equipping schools, managing teaching staff, control of buildings, selection of teachers, special educational programmes, etc. — all examples of executive areas which have now been assigned to other departments of the administration” (Alvarez Areces and Perez Collera, 1995, p. 162). This hand-in-hand reformulation of tasks and restructuring of administration has allowed the Inspectorate to focus on its pedagogic duties, both on advice and control. As a result, the number of school visits has increased significantly (ibid, p. 164).

While there may exist very valid pedagogic arguments for simplifying the supervisor’s role, this is not necessarily a simple task. Experiences from Asia in particular suggest that this is complex due to practical difficulties, including the fact that more staff will need to be employed and that teachers and heads will be under the supervision of too many persons. Moreover, “in the inevitable rivalry for influence, the supervisor with administrative functions tends to command more influence over institutions and teachers — and even parents and the public — than the purely academic supervisor” (UNESCO/PROAP, 1991, p. 209). To this must be added the fact that supervisors do not necessarily like to be relieved of all their administrative duties. It was noted earlier that their strong sense of professional independence complicated the task of simplifying supervision structures. It seems to make it equally hard, according to a survey on the European Union, to ask supervisors to concentrate merely on a few tasks: “there was frequent evidence during the survey that inspectors are reluctant to give up particular duties when professional institutes or bodies are set up within a school system, for example for curriculum development, in-service education for teachers and examinations. They somehow feel that their true responsibilities have been removed from them” (Hopes, 1992, p. 21). It must also be mentioned that a supervisor’s job description cannot be seen out of its political and administrative context: “the more centralized the system and the more politically doctrinaire its governance, the more likely it is that school inspectors will be seen as instruments for exerting
control over the system and what is taught within it" (Watson, 1994, p. 5247). In other words, changing the role and the image of the supervisor will be easier when such a change is part of wider political or management reform.

**Towards more openness and transparency**

Another trend is a tendency towards more openness and transparency. This has two implications. Firstly, supervisors' reports are increasingly made available to the 'clients' of the education system. In several countries, England, New Zealand, Spain and Sweden, for instance, global school evaluations are thus accessible or made available to the larger public and, in the first instance, to the local school community (OECD, 1995, p. 37). But there is no clear evidence yet to prove that such publicity leads to change. It is argued, in relation to Sweden, that "where evaluation stimulates change, it does so largely through administrative pressure or heightened awareness within the school of its own problems, rather than through accountability to a wider audience. Although assessments made at the municipal level are generally available to the public, there is not much tendency either for schools to make them accessible to parents, or for parents to take a direct interest in them" (OECD, 1995, p. 131). It should also be pointed out that such transparency is rare, if it exists at all, in developing countries, where inspection reports are generally considered highly confidential.

Second, there is also more openness and discussion with those being appraised. Clear criteria and procedures are being established for appraisal and assessment. They are openly discussed and formally spelled out in the form of standardized inspection guidelines. In France, for example, it is now a rule that each teacher should be notified several days in advance of the inspection. Moreover, an inspector can no longer base his or her assessment on only one lesson and walk away after the class visit. They now have to discuss the report with the teacher and to hand over a copy. In secondary schools there is even an obligation to discuss the result of the inspection with all staff in charge of a particular discipline (Lafond et al., 1992, pp. 53-54). The change in attitudes favouring a less authoritarian
relationship is also visible in the inclusion, in England and a few other countries, of lay personnel in the inspection teams that visit schools.

Some countries consider that, to ensure transparency, there might well be a need for supervisors to enjoy considerable autonomy. This is, and has been the case for a long time in England, where now privatization is the main trend, characterized by fully privatized inspection teams. Some OECD countries are also giving their supervision services more autonomy. In developing countries, on the other hand, most services remain an integral, non-autonomous part of the Ministry, although Mauritius (1991), for instance, foresees in its Education Master Plan that the national inspectorate will eventually become a semi-autonomous body offering independent and professional inspection services.

**Strengthening follow-up**

A third trend which is very much related to the previous one, has to do with attempts to strengthen follow-up actions on supervision. In a few OECD countries at least, rather comprehensive reforms have been put in place in this respect. One such attempt was made in England. Not only are inspection teams explicitly requested to discuss their evaluation with school staff, schools are required to produce action plans within 40 working days after the inspection, indicating how the recommendations will be acted upon. In principle these plans have to be approved by the Secretary of State. “The practical result for the school of the requirement to produce an action plan after the inspection is self-evident. Governors and senior managers are provided with an agenda of key issues by a set of objective judgement and supporting evidence. The most confident and shrewd schools will ‘exploit’ their inspections thoroughly, using them as a form of valuable consultancy” (OFSTED, 1994c, p. 44). However, evaluations of the first inspection visits under this reformed supervision show that, while follow-up has become more of an issue, there remains dissatisfaction - both at the level of the school and the system. “In over half the schools staff were disappointed that there was not more opportunity for discussion with inspectors after lessons” and they deplored in particular the “lack of professional dialogue between teachers and inspectors” (OFSTED, 1994c,
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Research on a small, reasoned sample of schools shows that schools indeed prepared a school development plan. But this did not guarantee implementation of the inspectors' recommendations. Nearly a year after the inspections, "only a third of the recommendations could be said to have been at least substantially implemented. (...) It appears that some types of recommendations were more likely to be implemented than others; for example, those concerned with management/administrative procedures and the production of school documentation. In contrast, recommendations involving issues of assessment, curriculum delivery and evaluation, and teaching and learning appear, at best, to have been only partially implemented. (...) Recommendations which implicitly assume some consequent change in the practice of teachers are likely to be among the most difficult to accomplish in the short term" (Gray and Wilcox, 1995, p.14). The authors relate the lack of implementation at least in part to the scarcity of professional support afforded to schools. Support services, which were mostly provided by the local authorities, have indeed suffered under these same reforms. In other words, this whole reform process "has proved an excellent framework for identifying a school's weaknesses, but does not address in any detail how to put them right" (OECD, 1995, p. 62).

Approaches adopted by Scotland (MacGregor, 1995, pp. 100-101) and Spain (OECD, 1995, pp. 118-120), among others, demand that supervisors and schools work together to raise standards and integrate follow-up visits by supervisors in the inspection process. The supervisor thus conforms more to the image of the friendly adviser than the outside evaluator. In those countries, sanctions against poor-performing schools and teachers are very rare. This is less the case in England and New Zealand, where "as a last resort, governing bodies can be dissolved and replaced temporarily by an agent or agency of the controlling authority" (OECD, 1995, p. 38). This has happened already to more than 20 schools in New Zealand. On the whole, in all countries, "sanctions for poor performance are far more common than rewards for success" (ibid). Very little is known about how supervision follow-up takes place or is being reformed (if it is) in developing countries. The reforms, as mentioned above, are mainly occurring in OECD countries.
Towards evaluation of schools rather than of teachers

The fourth significant trend is a change from individual teacher supervision to school evaluation. It is being increasingly realized that controlling individual teachers, or even providing them with advice and support, will not automatically lead to better school results. Improving the quality of schools involves much more than working with individual teachers. It requires a global approach directed towards the school as a whole, involving the relations between the school and the community, and paying full attention to the contextual factors. The focus should no longer be on individual teachers, but on the school as a whole and on all the aspects that intervene in school functioning. In England, this system of global school inspection by a team of inspectors has been systematized since the School Act of 1992. Each primary school is to be inspected every four years by a full-fledged inspection team. This team covers all aspects of the school functioning from financial management to pedagogical practices (OFSTED, 1993). It was previously pointed out that in England, and in some other countries, such school evaluations are related to the formulation of a school project by the staff. Inspectors or advisers are then expected, in some cases, to act as companions of the staff in realizing this project.

That being said, this scheme has considerable advantages, but it causes apprehensions among many observers, in particular in England, where the emphasis of such inspections is on evaluation rather than support and where school-based inspection is bound up with public information on school efficiency. Under those circumstances, student achievement, in the rather crude form of 'league tables', is usually taken as the standard by which schools are judged. This has serious implications because it may well lead to narrowing down the curriculum and the learning processes. Teachers end up teaching towards the examinations, and inspectors end up simply considering school outputs. Another worry is that schools will be 'strait jacketed'. Supervisors and advisers are given very specific information about how to undertake school evaluation. The best such example is the earlier mentioned Handbook of Inspection of Schools produced by OFSTED. It is an impressive volume of guidelines, instructions and instruments similar to those used by auditors in the business world. It is an extremely useful
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document for those who have to think about establishing clear rules for team inspection. But such instruments are not without their detractors, who see in them tools of uniformity and conformity.

Involvement in system evaluation

A fifth trend is an increasing involvement of supervision and support services in system evaluation. In several countries, supervisors and advisers have been invited by the policy-makers to add a new function of system evaluation to their traditional role of controlling and assisting teachers or schools. Once again, this is not a completely new trend. In 1974, the sixth Commonwealth Education Conference noted that “if a trend can be discerned, it lies in the direction of reducing the amount of inspection of individual teachers and schools, and making fuller use of the experience and expertise of inspectors in wider and more general issues and the formulation of policy” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1974, p. 17; see also Jones, 1973, on Australia). But then that trend was confirmed in reality in very few countries. Recently, it has gained a new impetus. At the request of the education authorities, supervisors are invited to produce consolidated reports which assess particular aspects of the functioning of the school system, such as the availability and use of teaching materials, the relative difficulties and successes of introducing new pedagogical methods, the management of primary-school teachers, or any other topic that may be of interest to the decision-maker. In France, in 1989, this change in the functions of the General Inspectorate was introduced on the grounds that, because of their intimate contacts with the school realities, inspectors were the best placed to assess the overall situation in a qualitative way. These reports have become an extremely important input for decision making at ministerial level. As mentioned above, yearly résumés are published for the public at large, which are commented upon widely in the press and are the basis for much political debate. This evolution gives increased value to the work of the supervision and support staff, who start acting as policy advisers rather than as mere controllers.
V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Making supervision and support services a tool to improve education, is not an obvious task. This review has underlined more than once that many efforts made in the past to improve the efficiency of external supervision services have not yielded the expected results. In recent years, the interest in supervision has gained renewed attention, and innovations are being tried out which have a more profound impact on the objectives and structures of supervision and support services. While it is still early to evaluate the success or failure of those innovations, a number of conclusions can be drawn from this whole literature review.

The growing interest in supervision is a result of the realization, highlighted in the introduction, that supervision and support staff have a central role to play in monitoring and enhancing the education and teaching process. This does not guarantee, however, that supervision is having a positive impact. Evidently, when it consists of irregular and brief school visits, whose main rationale is to fulfil a poorly appreciated administrative duty, its influence on teaching can hardly be beneficial. But even when supervision visits are performed efficiently, they will not instantly be effective in improving the quality of schools. On the one hand, it is true that close teacher supervision improves in particular teacher attendance and, arguably, teacher motivation. But, on the other hand, “the positive influence of teacher supervision does not result from restrictions on teacher autonomy ensuring compliance with ministry policies relating to instruction.” The opposite might well be true: “strategies and practices that are effective in boosting student performance (...) are not necessarily ones that conform to ministry policies” (Eisemon et al., 1992, p. 201). This is not to say that supervision and support staff should promote non-compliance with ministry policies. The right conclusion to draw is that such staff should have as an overarching objective ‘teacher development’. To quote Lyons and Pritchard (1976, p. 15): “Effective inspection appears to us to involve not only observation and assessment, not only looking at teachers but
looking at educational problems \textit{with} teachers and helping to point the way to their solution". This is, of course, easier said than done since it involves a fundamental change in attitude not only on behalf of the inspectors but also of all actors involved in managing the education system.

Supervision and support services do not exist in a vacuum. The nature of their environment is important from at least two points of view: its development and its power structure. The first point is obvious: "The influence for improvement that an inspectorate can exert is strongly conditioned by the circumstances in which teachers teach and pupils learn. If, for example, the physical environment of the schools is poor, with inadequate and dilapidated buildings and a lack of essential books and teaching equipment; if there is a high wastage rate of pupils and a high pupil/teacher ratio and the schools work in two or more shifts; if the pay and status of teachers are low with little financial incentives for professional improvement and responsibility; and if many of the teachers are untrained or undertrained and the head is merely a bureaucrat, the efforts of any inspector to improve the quality of the work are likely to be severely handicapped" (Lyons and Pritchard, 1976, p. 16). In other words, improving supervision is not any more of a panacea than improving any other single factor which plays a role in the complex process of teaching and learning. Improving supervision should be part of a comprehensive programme which, amongst other things, ensures that at least a minimum of resources are available to schools and to supervisors.

Equally important is the issue of relations of authority in the education system. When all or most decisions are taken at the central level, when supervisors have no authority whatsoever, beyond ensuring that central instructions are respected, and schools no autonomy beyond implementing instructions, it can be of little surprise that supervisors will become bureaucratic and autocratic and that teachers will consider them to be of little help, if not of actual hindrance. Indeed, "central to the argument about supervision is the debate on controlling teachers more or giving teachers more control" (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1988, quoted in Webb, 1991, pp. 116-17). A structural change, assigning appropriate responsibilities \textit{and}
decision-making power to supervisors, schoolheads and teachers, in other words, a form of decentralization, is in order.

In some contexts, this need for a structural change was interpreted as a plea for school autonomy, with the school being in charge of its own supervision and support, while the role of the central authorities would be limited to a distant monitoring. Such limiting of outside intervention to inspection, to the detriment of support, has led to criticism. In New Zealand, support must now be obtained from local teacher college advisers, the School Trustees' Association, or independent consultants. "Many schools miss the support offered by the old Inspectorate, and see this lack as a flaw in the new arrangements. And although support from local advisers is free, they are not always available when needed (...) Other sources of advice cost money, and those schools who most need the support are least likely to have the funds. (...) In the short run, the withdrawal from central support may lead to starker inequalities between successful and unsuccessful schools, as they reflect more accurately the social resources of their local community" (OECD, 1995, p. 100). In other words — and this is a crucial conclusion — promoting in-school supervision and support, without at the same time strengthening external supervision and support, could easily lead to an increased sense of isolation in schools and therefore disappointment among policy-makers, in particular in contexts where individual schools are less prepared for such 'autonomy' than are those in New Zealand or England. Rather than considering the two forms of supervision as conflicting, they should be seen as complementary: one cannot function efficiently without the other.

But for external supervision to work efficiently, it is important — to restress the fact — that its impact is felt in the classrooms, and therefore that supervisors are regularly able to visit schools. There is indeed no doubt that only officers based close to school can live up to this expectation. Their number therefore needs to be strengthened and, where they do not exist, they need to be put in place. Presently the absence or weakness of these 'proximity' services is, to a large extent, responsible for the overall dissatisfaction with supervision. A study on Mozambique, Zambia and Zim-
babwe concluded that "the most fundamental problems have been the poor administrative protection of local initiatives at intermediate levels in the hierarchy, coupled with the low quality of technical support services on the one hand, and the insufficient awareness among the local cadres of the importance of pedagogical autonomy and how this could be sustained, on the other hand" (Hoppers, 1996, p. 15). It was noted that several countries in different regions are focusing on this 'just above school' level and this is a welcome trend. These officers and/or centres have played a fundamental role in the success of a number of innovative programmes, including the education programme set up by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Ahmed et al, 1993), the 900 schools programme in Chile (Filp, 1993) and the Escuela Nueva in Colombia (Schiefelbein, 1992). Where such personnel or offices already exist, it is arguably better to enhance it than to build up an alternative circuit. The former has been successfully accomplished in, for instance, the 900 schools programme in Chile (Filp, 1993, p. 24). In Pakistan, on the other hand, where learning co-ordinators were introduced as part of a foreign-financed project, without being integrated in the existing supervision and support structures, rivalry quickly ensued and this led to obstruction of what was in itself a useful innovation (Warwick et al., 1992, p. 299).

While the usefulness of such close-to-school structures is not in doubt, their feasibility is often problematic. Indeed, the question immediately arises how governments, who have not even the resources to take proper care of the existing administrative structures, will provide for this additional tier of officers. A partial answer can be found in a review of the present highly inefficient mode of assigning supervision and support staff to schools. This is done mainly, if not exclusively, on the basis of numbers of schools and teachers. Account is not taken of the resources already available in a school or in its environment, neither of its needs. The result is that the most needy schools generally end up with the least support, as supervisors are seldom eager to go to the most remote schools in areas with the poorest services. It is not difficult to imagine a system whereby supervision structures differ from urban over rural to remote rural areas and whereby the number of supervisors will be assigned in function of the needs of the
schools (e.g. the schools with the least qualified staff will be given more support). But such a proposal demands a rethinking of the overall administrative structures and the availability, in particular at the level closest to the school, of indicators on the quality and effectiveness of each school and teacher. Reforming supervision indeed remains a challenging task.
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The book
School supervision services have existed in most countries for many decades and occupy a pivotal position in the management of education, between the schools and central offices. In practice, however, these services are facing a number of problems which make their work difficult and seriously limit the positive impact which they should have on the quality of the education system. In many countries, supervisory services have been weakened by a shortage of resources, and are at the same time overwhelmed by the volume and the variety of tasks to be accomplished.

Recently, however, this picture has changed. Different countries are making deliberate efforts to improve their supervision system. Especially at a time when schools are given more autonomy to manage their human, material and financial resources, the need for supportive supervision is increasingly felt. But for supervisors to play this developmental role, structures as well as attitudes have to undergo deep and lasting change.

This analysis of the literature on supervision services examines in detail, and with references to developed and developing countries, the main problems impeding the effectiveness of supervision services, especially at primary school level. This is followed by a critical look at various attempts to reform supervision. A number of significant trends are highlighted and the lessons that can be drawn from these experiences are summarized.

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