The first thing I would like to say is that Scotland is not England—all that you know about Ofsted, forget. (Donaldson speech, Joint seminar SICI-French inspectorates, December 2008).

The History of HMIe
The Inspectorate in Scotland has long been a powerful presence with influence in policy formation within and outside the central education department (McPherson and Raab 1988:135). The quotation below, from a former Senior Chief Inspector, conveys their historical role and their view of themselves:

‘Does change in policy-making bring change in the Inspectorate, or is it the other way round? Both hinge of the issue by the Department of memoranda embodying current professional thinking, which can-potentially at least-alter the character of our whole traditional system. Inspectors promote the policy contained in them as a central aim of their day to day business. But they are also instrumental in the compilation of these documents, for their unique knowledge of schools, and their relationship with people in all parts of the educational system which enable them to sound opinions freely, contribute most of the evidence on which the recommendations are based’ (EIS 1966a quoted in McPherson and Raab 1988: 135-6).

In sum, the SCI went on, through its work the Inspectorate had ‘drawn a net tightly over the whole of Scottish education’. Indeed much of the discussion of the inspectorate in the key text ‘Governing Education’ (McPherson and Raab 1988) focuses on the power struggle between the central department and the inspectorate and on the question of the independence of the Inspectorate from political control. McPherson and Raab interpret this history as one of strong positioning by HMIe from 1945 onwards, as it had the monopoly of inspection functions—there were no local inspectors. It should also be remembered that the Scottish Education Department (SED) looked to the Inspectorate to provide system leadership, as it defined itself as primarily an administrative unit, ‘running’ Scottish education for Westminster and Whitehall. Within this framework of separate development the inspectorate operated as policy innovators and enjoyed the predominant position in education in Scotland until the 1960s, when ‘the Inspectorate’s wings were clipped’ (McPherson and Raab 1988:148). McPherson and Raab associate this change with the beginnings of attempts by the Department to more actively manage the system: to plan resource allocation to the new, larger-scale comprehensive schools, and to manage teacher careers. The role of the Inspectorate in these processes is viewed more or less critically by commentators: on the one hand they are seen to be agents of more managerial tendencies in the Department (Humes 1986: 74) trading their political independence for power, on the other their capacity to use their position and resources to ‘bolster their own position’ is emphasised (McPherson and Raab 1988: 151).

It is probable that the inspectorate in this period both increased its power and became more overtly political, as professional and policy divisions about key directions increased throughout the 1960s and 70s, and these threatened their mobilisation of objective, expertise-based authority. These developments included the expansion of the system following the raising of the school leaving age to 16 in 196x, and the growth of, and
debate about, comprehensive provision. However the Inspectorate continued to be a major force in Scottish education, expanding its remit and activities to present itself in the 1970s as ‘consultant, co-ordinator, co-operator, catalyst, digestor, enabler encourager helper, honest broker, guide, link person, meter reader, operator, observer, reporter, refresher, stimulator, trouble-shooter, visionary, watchdog’ (MacLean 1976). Indeed, the fragmentation of a previously very standardised system offered HMIe the chance to claim a unifying authority and knowledge that no other group could match.

Throughout the 1980s there were considerable tensions between the Thatcher-led Conservative UK governments and those responsible for education in Scotland—pre-devolution, was governed by the UK parliament and government through the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Office. Throughout this period across the UK there is a steady growth of standardisation of practice and an increase in active management, often based on ideas uncritically imported from business and industry (or perhaps on what business and management practices were imagined to be—see xxrefs) along with a spread of certification and national criteria for the evaluation of schools, managers and teachers. The Inspectorate becomes a presence at an ‘increasing number of points of articulation’ of the system (MacPherson and Raab 1988: 494), but within a framework whose orientation is determined elsewhere, and whose reference points lie outside education.

Throughout the 1990s the inspectorate becomes more managerial in style, moving towards heavier reliance on their own evidence, reducing contact with the wider research community, and also moving away from scholarship as a criterion for appointment as an inspector (Weir 2008: 146). As a consequence, Weir—himself a former HMI—suggests that their activities became more technicist and managerial. Senior HMI were influential in drafting the first education act of the new Scottish Parliament in 2000, which placed legal obligations on schools and education authorities to manage improvement. The Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act set out statutory requirements for school improvement within a framework encompassing a set of five National Priorities (Scottish Parliament, 2000). A series of performance indicators were identified for each priority and education authorities were expected to agree targets for achievement of these indicators with their schools. In constructing this legislation, the inspectorate was reflecting UK policy: the Standards Act was promoted by the New Labour-controlled Scottish government as a way of reassuring the UK government that the Scottish system would continue to work in alignment with performance management methods, despite devolution (EGSIE REF). At the same time, there was a major crisis in education in Scotland following from the examinations debacle of 2000, when new examinations, introduced hurriedly as part of system modernisation, led to thousands of students receiving the wrong results or none (Bryce and Humes 2008). The new parliament established two committees of enquiry, one of which focused on accountability. The Inspectorate was implicated in this crisis, and the change in the political landscape provided an opportunity for the expression of resentment against its dominant role in Scottish education. The establishment of the parliament undermined the inspectorate’s claim to be the champion of Scottish interests against the UK political leadership, and, as ‘the exam crisis provided the opportunity to drive the attack home’ the Inspectorate lost its policy-making role (Raffe et al 2001) and ceased to be an independent body, becoming instead an executive agency, directly accountable to Ministers and not to the Crown.

As one of our informants put it, reflecting on this period:
‘We no longer have a formal role in leading policy or leading development….when we became an agency we no longer have that title. Formally we give professional advice….there could be recommendations and so on but when I joined HMI in 1992 I wrote my first speech for [the then Minister] within a fortnight. This no longer happens. We are now notably at second hand’ (HMIE 3)

Since the election of the minority SNP government in 2007, we see the Inspectorate recovering its position, and, indeed, advancing beyond its traditional role to promote an identify as ‘teachers’ of good practice within Scotland and indeed, within Europe. In the next section we look at the factors that have enabled this recovery, firstly on the European stage and then within the national system.

Teaching and Learning: HMIE, TSG and SICI

Our analysis suggests that there is a relationship between HMIE’s recovery of its influential and highly visible position in Scottish education and the changing politics of post-devolution Scotland. Although there were close parallels in education policy between England and Scotland from the period of the post-war Keynesian welfare state, there is evidence of divergence from the late 1970s onwards, when the Conservative-controlled UK administrations re-made education in line with market principles. However whereas England introduced a National Curriculum with National Testing and a strong focus on hard performance indicators, these approaches were successfully resisted in Scotland. Scotland did not create a data-driven system and the Scottish Inspectorate continued to be recruited from a professional base of teachers even in its period of diminished autonomy: it did not recruit from commercial agencies.

Furthermore, the election of a minority Scottish National Party (SNP) government in Scotland in 2007 marked a break from UK Labour party policy influence on the Scottish political scene, and brought about considerable change in style of government (Arnot and Ozga, 2010). Decentralisation is a key principle of the SNP’s redesign of governance in Scotland. Decentralisation is promoted by the SNP government as a way of building an independent Scottish state. They argue that it demonstrates maturity in the political process, developing from political devolution, and enables the growth of accountability and hence trust between government and its partners, local authorities and other stakeholders. The Scottish Government, with a majority since the May 2011 election, has attempted to ‘craft a narrative’ of joint or collective learning that connects to growing national capacity and independence through education. Expert judgment, evidence, the building of trust and constant learning from self-evaluation are referenced as elements in building this capacity, not only in relation to education/learning policy and institutions, but more broadly as a key support for governing. In this context the Inspectorate are once again significant policy actors: they carry the self-evaluation agenda into a receptive European space, and they model and ‘teach’ self-evaluation within the national space.

Europe is an important resource in this promotion of Scotland as ‘not England’. While England has been and continues to be pre-occupied with its global positioning, justifying further change in education policy by reference to the threat of being overtaken by Finland, Singapore and other competitors (WP ref), the Scottish government is actively pro-European, and seeks to discursively re-position ‘smarter Scotland’ alongside selected small, social democratic states in Europe, especially Norway and Sweden, and to use Europe as a platform for the projection of a distinctive Scottish identity (Arnott and Ozga 2010, Grek and Ozga 2010). HMIE take advantage of this external platform to explain the ‘distinctiveness of Scotland’ to Europe, and to promote Scotland’s approach
to self-evaluation (of which more below) as ‘in line with evolving European-wide models’ (HMie3). Scottish policy actors articulate a pro-European narrative in which Europe is presented as a network of people and ideas that travel and connect in unexpected and interesting ways. They construct the European education policy space as an area of exchange of experience and good practice. Interviewees describe a policy community, operating through more informal rather than formal relationships of policy dialogue, learning and trust:

We're talking about things which almost develop into friendships and good collegiate working ....it's constant ... and likely to become more [so]. And it seems to me having discussed it with colleagues at various meetings over in Europe, as more and more accession countries come in that a lot of the countries that are coming are actually seeking assistance and advice and support. And they see particularly the European network policy makers group as a vehicle for that (HMie5).

HMie are actively involved in developing inspection regimes as Inspection grows in significance within Europe, and this is reflected in their very active participation in the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). HMie have provided two Presidents of SICI and the growth of international comparison especially through PISA has provided it with a stronger role in interpreting and translating international data across and within systems. As a senior (Scottish) SICI member put it:

It [PISA] has moved the policy priority hierarchy quite substantially and again people have had to learn very quickly and move from what was previously a pretty low key, fairly well-established mechanism within government to suddenly finding themselves quite high profile with expectations on inspectorates and inspectors growing considerably in countries across Europe (HMie2)

HMie have also been influential in a major project –the ‘Effective School Self-Evaluation’ project (ESSE) undertaken by SICI and funded by the European Commission (Socrates 6.1), from 2001-2003. ESSE aims were to identify key indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of school self-evaluation; to develop a methodology for inspecting school self-evaluation; to identify the weaknesses of school self-evaluation across countries and regions; to produce an analysis of how self-evaluation and external evaluation could be most effectively combined; and to produce case studies of effective self-evaluation in practice. Thirteen European countries and regions took part in the project and a member of HMie was the manager of the project. Another indicator of HMie influence is the SICI Academy, SIA (SICI Inspection Academy) which is run by a former HMie.

In addition to informal contacts and exchanges, there is evidence of more formal, contractual ‘consultancy’ work, through which Scotland has been ‘teaching’ self-evaluation to Europe:

That was much more people, individual countries within that group being aware that Scotland was doing something they found quite interesting and productive and constructive. And they came to us and were interested. And therefore we've had this dialogue ...

1 These were England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech republic, Portugal, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Hesse, Saxony and Denmark – Denmark, although it does not have an inspection system, has a long tradition of quality assurance processes. Therefore the focus in Denmark was on the role of the Danish national advisors.
There is a lot of ... a lot of European links. And, for instance, and the visits to Scotland and the relationship will be of a number of different kinds. Some will be straightforward. A contract between us and, say, Malta and the Czech Republic to provide various services which involves staff development training.

(HMIe5)

Our research suggests that the Scottish inspectorate has used SICI as a platform for promoting the role of professional knowledge and skills that contribute to European wide initiatives while also stressing Scotland’s distinctiveness. A senior SICI informant stresses the role of SICI as a resource to the Commission in influencing education policy, and as a way for the inspectorates to influence policy in Europe:

I think it is that...EU doesn't have competence in school education-they can't push the boundaries very much in terms of where ...they should have a role. I think that they see that working with SICI from the Commission's point of view again blurs the boundaries of what they do. But from SICI's point of view the reality is that the EU has policy influence on member countries and it is one of the ways that SICI can be part of this policy interaction (HMIe2)

The key policy technology that HMIE are promoting in Europe and within Scotland is school self-evaluation (SSE) as set out in the key text 'How Good is our School' (HGIOS). A key factor in enabling the mobilisation of this approach is its inclusiveness (our school):

There has tended to be quite a lot of exchanges with inspectorates from other countries-Sweden came here for example, and the Norwegians are now looking at HGIOS. Scotland's certainly one of the early pioneers of self-evaluation-the thing that attracted so much attention to the system here was just the way HGIOS was produced as very school-focused, schools found it easy to use, accessible-an easy way of capturing data-so HGIOS has been very much discussed and the momentum often translated-whereas other inspectorates-as in England-have tended to produce things that were written as inspection guidelines'(HMIe1)

HGIOS positions the inspectorate as guides and enablers of quality assurance processes that are built and maintained by the school, using HMIE guidance. We now look in more detail at HGIOS and SSE, within the Scottish system.

**HMIE in Scotland**

Within Scotland, as well as externally, School Self-evaluation (SSE) has provided the inspectorate with a means of recovering their status and role, and offered a new way in which they can shape the system. Indeed self-evaluation has enabled the inspectorate to expand into other areas of provision (for example into local authority inspection and into integrated children’s services, where HMIE have created a common system of inspection based on education quality assurance indicators and processes). As we have seen, SSE provided the inspectorate with an agenda for policy teaching, taking SSE to other countries, and this further strengthens their position at home.

School self-evaluation seeks to create a school evaluation framework that brings about constant comparison and improvement, broadly focusing on answering two key questions about educational practice: ‘How good are we now?’ in order to identify strengths and development needs in key aspects of teachers’ work and the impact it has on learners; and ‘How good can we be?’ in order to set priorities for improvement. As
HGIOS makes clear, the shift in responsibility produces a holistic approach to evidence and learning: 'schools are not islands. They work with other schools, colleges, employers and a number of other services' (HGIOS 2007; 55). SSE is used as a means of encoding school knowledge, creating 'compatibilities' and promoting self-managed and self-sufficient individuals (both teachers and pupils) in a decentralised, inclusive system. In other words, schools and their teachers and pupils become members of learning organisations, embedded within the larger learning organisation of the local authority and, indeed, of government itself. HGIOS positions the inspectors as guides and enablers of quality assurance processes that are built and maintained by the school, using HMIe guidance. Self-evaluation is a powerful tool in the building of what Sassen calls 'imposed consensus' through the promotion of specific values that relate to the creation of self-managed and self-sufficient individuals (both teachers and pupils). In other words, as schools learn self-evaluation, so they are asked more and more to take responsibility for improvement. The coding enables the shift to the apparent 'light touch' of new inspection practices, while co-opting schools further into the new networks of knowledge production. Furthermore, as they do more, they produce more and more new knowledge about themselves, which becomes productive for the constant improvement not only of the individual school, but for the governing of the system as a whole.

The Inspectorate developed and monitors the HGIOS quality framework which encourages schools to develop and use their own knowledge about themselves to conduct ongoing self-monitoring and self-evaluation leading to school improvement. The Inspection framework, along with schools’ self-evaluation are designed to provide the Scottish government with reliable data about the health and performance of the sector as well as to inform policy development.

A key development supporting the growth of self-evaluation has been a move away from the use of attainment data along with inspection visits and towards use of the self-evaluation/self monitoring processes that are now a constant requirement on schools. This shift emphasises the schools’ responsibility for their ongoing quality monitoring, evaluating and reporting processes. School leaders are responsible for constant self-monitoring and self-evaluation and for improving their school’s performance and
attainment levels for learners within the context of responding to the ever changing and complex demands of their communities and society. The quality framework documented in HGIOS and used by both the Inspectors and schools extends the scope of assessment and evaluation so that the interrelationship of different aspects of a school’s provision is highlighted. This more holistic view of school performance includes different kinds of knowledge gained from learners, staff, parents and community surveys.

The self-evaluation process asks schools to evaluate their performance in terms of impact and outcomes and to identify priorities for action leading to improvements and innovation. The Quality Framework in HGIOS (2007) includes a revised set of Quality Indicators that guide the process of self-evaluation. There are three key domains against which schools must assess their performance; these are:

(i) successes and achievements;
(ii) the work and life of the school,
(iii) vision and leadership.

Evidence of self-evaluation is required in three main forms: (i) Knowledge based quantitative data (ii) People’s views (iii) Professional/expert direct observation and documentation.

Schools are encouraged not to use the framework of quality indicators as ‘checklists or recipes’, but the idea of offering teachers specific tools for evaluation is well-embedded in the policy culture surrounding the self-evaluation movement in Scotland. The quality indicators become tools for pedagogic practice since they provide teachers with a new language, a new framework of what is taking place in the classroom: evidence of its impact can then be produced and communicated at any point – the need to always be ready to be accountable is emphasised. In fact, the significance and reach of the quality indicators is far wider than the classroom, but extends across the public services more generally:

Schools and pre-school centres are now part of a wider partnership of professionals, all of whom deliver a range of services to children. This edition of How Good is Our School?, therefore, has evolved by adopting a framework for self-evaluation common to all public services and structured around six questions which are important for any service to answer (HMIE 2007:3).

This is particularly important as it highlights the ways in which a policy instrument like HGIOS, initially created to produce specific knowledge about school effectiveness, is now to be used across a range of ‘services’ for children and young people—effectively, self-evaluation has become the key policy regime for accountability across public services in Scotland.

HGIOS heralds new ways of working for teachers where teamwork and peer reviews are an important aspect of reflective practitionership; it recommends that all staff engage in professional discussion and reflection based on ‘shared understanding of quality and a shared vision of their aims for young people’ (ibid; 3). Self-evaluation is the new professional practice that needs to be part of the working practices of all staff, leaders and teachers alike – it becomes the major vehicle for learning and teaching; ‘self-evaluation becomes a reflective
professional process which helps schools get to know themselves well, identify their agenda for improvement and promote well-considered innovation’ (ibid;3).

HGIOS and self-evaluation more generally then are of interest not only as a significant policy shift in terms of the assessment of school effectiveness; they also indicate towards a new relationship between knowledge and schools as educational establishments. Ultimately, self-evaluation as a governing regime replaces discussions of pedagogy and epistemology in schools, with a new focus, that of a continuous self-awareness of weaknesses and strengths and a disposition towards constant comparison and improvement. This is systematically promoted through all HGIOS publications; words starting with ‘improve’ are to be found in 189 instances in the HGIOS 2007 text, a 57 page document where at least half of its pages are images. This emphasis on self-awareness and continuous improvement of oneself signals a new emphasis on the relationship between knowledge and schools. Schools are not to be viewed as beacons of wisdom and enlightenment as older value systems wanted them to be, where knowledge could be externally viewed as something that lies ‘out there’ waiting to be found and explored; rather, knowledge becomes more of an internal process of ‘self-awareness’, self-management and self-improvement. That self-evaluation is not simply a self-assessment exercise for teachers but increasingly a way of being for all, pupils, parents and teachers alike, is documented in HGIOS:

The evaluative activities involved (in HGIOS) are similar to those which we encourage pupils to engage in as part of their own learning process. Taking part in them creates a community of learners (ibid; 7).

Indeed, self-evaluation is promoted as a professional process that should not be mechanistic or bureaucratic—it is a guide to practice, ‘alongside other sources of guidance such as curriculum advice, research into learning and pedagogy and studies of leadership styles and approaches (ibid;6). In terms of its specific characteristics, HGIOS argues that teachers need to be ‘forward-looking’, ‘promote well-considered innovation’, as well as ‘peer evaluation’ (ibid;7). In particular, teachers are asked to be active in:

‘-commenting on each other’s work, for example plans and assessments;
-engaging in cooperative teaching and discussion; and
-visiting each other’s classroom to see how particular developments are going, to experience different methods of teaching or to confirm our views of learner’s progress’ (ibid;7).

Teachers are asked to organise their work and gather evidence (so that nothing ‘slips through the net’ (ibid;8)) in order to always be in a position to answer the following questions:
According to the HGIOS framework, this approach allows for celebrating best practice, or in the case of weaknesses, these ‘can be tracked down by focusing on some of the indicators’ (ibid;15). This approach is called a ‘proportionate approach’, since it ‘enables you to focus on areas of priority rather than routinely covering all aspects of the school’s work in turn’ (ibid;15).

There are 30 quality indicators under the following headings:  
- Key performance outcomes  
- Impact on learners  
- Impact on staff  
- Impact on the community  
- Delivery of education  
- Policy development and planning  
- Management and support of staff  
- Partnership and Resources  
- Leadership  
- Capacity for Improvement (HMIE 2007).

The self-evaluation procedure set out in HGIOS requires schools to look at each aspect of provision and ask: How are we doing? How do we know? What are we going to do now? For each indicator, the school is expected to gather evidence in order to evaluate performance on a 6-point scale from 1 (Unsatisfactory) to 6 (Excellent). A range of relevant themes are developed for each indicator, its key features as well as ‘illustrations’ of what a level 5 (very good) evaluation would be, as well a level 2 (weak). For example, in terms of ‘Improvement through self-evaluation’,

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2 Please find a complete list of indicators at the Appendix.
Again, as discussed earlier, the focus is on how well 'the school knows itself'; strong emphasis at the level 5 illustration is on 'improvement', whereas at level 2, lack of consensus, teamwork and rigour of data are seen as detrimental to effective self-evaluation. In terms of what kinds of information teachers need to gather, what is proposed is ‘triangulation’ of quantitative data with people’s views and direct observation:
- Takes place in a particular political context. Accountability and trust between government and its partners (local authorities, professions and other stakeholders) is strategically important. A significant element in building trust and co-opting partners in governing is self-evaluation.

- HMIE become important teachers and mediators in the new governing relations

The coding of knowledge through self-evaluation enables flows of knowledge within and across new networks of knowledge production. Furthermore, as schools and learners do more, they produce more and more new knowledge about themselves, which becomes productive for the constant improvement not only of the individual school, but for the governing of the system as a whole. Moreover the knowledge produced through self-evaluation is integrated knowledge in which the learner is recognised as an agent in knowledge production and use.

'[we focus] very strongly on 3 purposes of inspection….assurance to the public-accountability…. But there’s also a strong function, from my point of view, in informing policy development, managing policy development. For that reason, partly, we think its good to have strong links with the department, ministers, as we currently do……purpose 3 is really being an engine for spreading best practice across the system –we are in a unique position seeing so much front line practice across the whole country on a regular basis-we should capitalise on that evidence base by capturing the best and putting it back to others’. (HMIE 3)

The evaluative activities involved in HGIOS are similar to those which pupils are required to engage in as part of their own learning processes. Taking part in them creates a community of learners (HGIOS:2007:7)

Teachers are asked to organise their work and gather evidence (so that nothing ‘slips through the net’ (ibid; 8)) in order to always be in a position to answer the following questions:
Self-evaluation as promoted by the Inspectorate can be regarded as a tool to encode school knowledge, create consensus and promote specific values that relate to the creation of self-managed and self-sufficient individuals (both teachers and pupils). Self-evaluation encodes school knowledge, creates consensus and promotes specific values that relate to the creation of self-managed and self-sufficient individuals (both teachers and pupils). This coding enables the apparent ‘light touch’ of self-regulation, while co-opting schools and learners into the constant improvement of the system as a whole. The growth of self-evaluation has been supported by development of inspection practices that stress schools’ responsibility for their continuous quality monitoring, evaluating and reporting processes, and recast the Scottish Inspectorate as ‘teachers’ of the system, modeling through their own practice and expert judgment the qualities that good teachers should develop and display. This development is promoted by the Scottish government as a shift from central control to deregulation, and is connected to the promotion of the government as a ‘learning government’, working in concert with its partners and thus creating more confident individuals that have the capacity for political independence. As a senior policy maker puts it, reflecting on the tradition of strong central direction with which the SNP government claims to have broken:

……..so for decades you have had this top down approach in education which has been civil servants telling ministers, ministers then tell local government, local government then tell directors of education and directors of education tell head teachers and then head teachers tell teachers. There is this suffocation by direction ….so we are changing the education system, we hope, from one of dependence to one of independence and again that it quite a challenge... ....you can't be confident individuals if you think other people will do things for you....whether it is on a personal basis or a national…(SPM5)

Discussion

Inspectorates stand in a particular relation to ‘governing knowledge’ (Ozga 2008, Grek, Lawn and Ozga 2009 forthcoming). They combine embodied and encoded knowledge (Lave and Wenger 1991) by bringing their expert judgement and objective data into relationship with one another; they have responsibility for ensuring that knowledge about system performance is translated into use by policy makers at all levels, and by practitioners; and they are also engaged in building improvement and knowledge about improvement within and across systems. At the same time Inspectors are responsible for ensuring that (sometimes shifting) accountability requirements are met: to greater or lesser degrees they claim independence from central governments, and offer public judgements about the performances of education systems that have political implications (Clarke 2005, Davis and Martin 2008

Governing through data is not straightforward: data do not translate automatically into action but require constant attention and effort to build and maintain consensus, with struggles and dissent around their meaning always possible. Data exist within a growing mass of accumulated information in different forms, and from different sources that are not compatible or standardised. In the regulatory framework adopted in England, the translation of data into action has been located with technocratic policy actors, operating in a highly centralized system, congruent with the positioning of English education as ‘world class’ and competitive, and framed entirely by a global
discourse of economic competition and enhanced performance. The data driven regime in England of performance management demands processes of managerial accountability and the setting of targets, the use of incentives and threats and the constant measuring of results. These activities are focused on driving up performance, but do not connect to broader narratives that draw in citizens and professionals. Nor do they offer a role to Inspectorates that recognises their expertise and their potential as ‘teachers’ or ‘translators’ of governing knowledge.

In Scotland, the self-evaluation strategy is congruent with the overarching governing narrative of growing autonomy and collective improvement, and the inspectorate has been mobilized to propagate this strategy. The SNP government was (until its convincing election victory in May 2011, when it was returned to power with a much increased majority) very reliant on discourse to manage its governing project, and thus it is hardly surprising that a sophisticated narrative of collective engagement has been promoted that relies on co-option and collective identification, in England the focus remains on compliance and performance. In both cases examination of the nature of the policy technologies and the role of data and inspectorates in operating them enables us to better understand the ‘governing project’ of nation states, within the context of global and European developments.

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