# Technicisation and Recognition of Effective Teaching in Inspection Policy

**Alison M. Brady**
**UCL Institute of Education**
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## 1.      Introduction

How do we recognise effective teaching?

When it comes to teaching and learning, one of the primary aims of inspection policy is to measure their effectiveness. Often, it is argued, that effective teaching has the greatest impact on the attainment levels of pupils (DES (Ireland), 2016; Hattie, 2008). The general sentiment seems to align with the idea that effective teaching, more often than not, generates an effective lesson, which in turn produces effective learners. On a similar vein, ineffective teachers are often thought to lead to ineffective learners.

But what exactly do we mean by 'effective'? In recent years, the term 'good' has been used interchangeably with the term 'effective' in the policy of teacher inspection or, in the case of Ireland (DES (Ireland) 2016), has been almost entirely replaced by the latter. Prominent inspection educationalists, such as John MacBeath (1999), suggest that the hunt for the 'good school' is akin to hunting a unicorn – some mythical endeavour which is seemingly never obtained. Whereas the 'good' in education might be considered a kind of teleological ideal towards which we move but never fully apprehend, 'effective' takes a much more hard-lined stance. Partly, this is due to the prevalence of school effectiveness research in the formulation of inspection policies on teaching and learning, which, understood simplistically, seeks to equate effective teaching with desired learning outcomes (Goldstein, 1997). The kinds of factors which impinge on the level of effectiveness of schools, according to this body of research, are often uncontroversial or 'common sense' and include ideas such as the importance of strong, professional leadership, a focus of inspection on the improvement of teaching and learning, or links between the school and the home (See, for example: Killen, 2006). And whilst effectiveness researchers often add the disclaimer that what their research shows us are correlations, and not explanations, such findings are often conceived of in policy literature as recipes or clear demarcations of what 'effective' practice should look like.

One of the primary differences between positing a 'good' school or teacher and an 'effective' one may be to do with the level of accuracy in how one can measure such qualities. A 'good' teacher appears to be somewhat relativistic or subjective, in the debased sense of the term. On the other hand, an 'effective' teacher is one that can be more easily identified using objective, verifiable 'evidence' of some kind, on the basis of certain performance indicators the inspectorate might establish against which this effectiveness can be gauged.

In relation to inspection, often this involves taking due consideration of a particular 'profile' of effectiveness which is usually externally generated via a clearly formulated 'framework', even, as we will see below, in inspection policies which focus on internal rather than external review systems. Although this term 'profile' is often not used explicitly, the idea is that, in correspondence with the criteria set forth in inspection handbooks (DES (Ireland), 2016), the exercise of *recognising* effective teachers becomes much simpler, more procedural and more efficient.

What this paper tries to untangle, therefore, are the ways in which effective teaching is recognised through the formulation of technical frameworks which encompass reductive criteria for 'effective' teaching. It argues that the emphasis on that which is 'effective', and therefore measurable, has led to an overly technicist understanding of teaching and learning, and the rapport between both. By establishing particular profiles against which 'effective' teaching and, by extension, 'effective' learning is recognised, it does not give due credence to a more fundamental struggle for recognition that is inescapable in classroom practice. This struggle for recognition is sometimes overt, sometimes covert, and is often inarticulable. Because of its ineffability, it is also strangely unfettered to any form of measurement, and yet it is something which is pervasive and persistent and should not be ignored, particularly because of its impact on identity (re)formation.

In order to show what this struggle for recognition looks like, I will turn to the famous idea of 'the look' or 'the gaze' as explored in the work of the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre. First, however, let's look more closely at the kinds of profiles of effectiveness that are established in the current self-evaluation frameworks in Ireland, and how this relates to a more debased understanding of recognition.

## 2. Profiling through Prescription: What Constitutes 'Effective' Practice?

The Republic of Ireland has adopted a combination approach to inspection often referred to as 'smart regulation'. Such regulation comes in the form of school self-evaluation, a method of internal review, which is then complemented by external inspections whose primary function is to motivate and support this process. This dual form of regulation is 'smart', not only because it is cost-effective, but also because it seemingly offers greater ownership over the ways in which schools and their teachers self-evaluate their practices, whilst also upholding the principle of school accountability through greater responsibilisation of schools.

This idea of smart regulation is summarised by the prominent self-evaluation researcher, John MacBeath (1999, p. 1) who refers to 'educationally healthy' systems of self-evaluation as follows:

> Its primary goal is to help schools to maintain and improve through critical self-reflection.
> It is concerned to equip teachers with the know-how to evaluate the quality of learning in
> their classrooms so that they do not have to rely on an external view, yet welcome such a
> perspective because it can enhance and strengthen good practice.

Using a diagram established by Schratz *et al* (1998), MacBeath (1999, p. 3) emphasises the need for a balance between external and internal evaluation, since when that "point of balance is achieved, people are enabled to do their job most effectively because they experience intrinsic satisfaction as well as extrinsic recognition and reward."
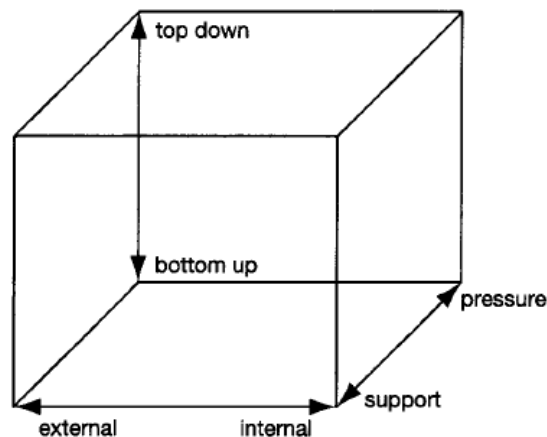
*Diagram 1.1* Three dimensions of school evaluation and development

(MacBeath, 1999, p. 2)

In order to achieve this balance, it was considered that both internal and external evaluation should adopt the same profiles of effective teaching. Alluding to this idea, the Chief Inspectorate of Ireland, Harold Hislop (2012) remarked that:

> A responsive regulatory system cannot operate effectively unless everyone involved is clear about the standards against which the service is to be judged. This means that if we are to use a combination of external inspection and school self-evaluation, we must articulate a clear set of standards against which the work and outputs of schools can be judged.

In 2016, this was achieved with the establishment of a common inspection framework for both internal and external evaluations of schools, with a specific emphasis on teaching and learning, entitled "Looking at Our Schools: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools." In it, we see various criteria of what an 'effective' and a 'highly effective' school looks like.

The quality framework is quite complicated and extensive, to say the least. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus exclusively on the kinds of profiles of effectiveness that are offered throughout, rather than the systematised process by which self-evaluation is undertaken.

The criteria outlined in the framework focuses primarily on what effective, and by way of comparison, highly effective teaching and learning looks like. Consider this example of the difference between effective and highly effective teaching:

| STANDARDS | STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE | STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills | Teachers have the required professional qualifications and have engaged in a range of continuing professional development (CPD). | Teachers have the required professional qualifications and have engaged in a range of continuing professional development (CPD) relevant to students' learning. |
| | Teachers create an inclusive, orderly, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust. | Teachers create an inclusive, orderly, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust, in which students regulate and monitor their own behaviour. |
| | Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour, and communicate these expectations effectively to students. | Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour, communicate these expectations effectively to students, and facilitate students in internalising them. |

<div align="right">(DES (Ireland), 2016, p. 17)</div>

A similar lay-out is designed in the framework for effective and highly effective learning:

| Students grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive | Interactions among students and between students and teachers are respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being. | Interactions among students and between students and teachers are very respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Relationships and interactions in classrooms and learning areas support a co-operative and productive learning environment. | Relationships and interactions in classrooms and learning areas create and sustain a co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment. |
| | Students' experiences as learners generally reflect well on how the code of behaviour is understood and implemented. | Students' experiences as learners reflect consistently well on how the code of behaviour is understood and implemented. |
| | Students feel able to contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion. They listen respectfully to the opinions and experiences of their classmates. | Students contribute their opinions and experiences to class discussion with confidence. They are respectful of and interested in the opinions and experiences of their classmates. |

<div align="right">(DES (Ireland), 2016, p. 15)</div>

All of this seems quite reasonable. It seems almost obvious that a student is most likely happier in a classroom which is orderly and respectful. But is that enough? Is it always conducive to 'effective' learning? How do we know? Can such effective teaching and learning be measured in accordance with these standards of effective and highly effective practice? The inspectorate certainly seems to think so, and this is made evident by the tools that are suggested for teachers to gain reliable evidence which supports their findings. These include student or parental questionnaires on how much they enjoy school, observations on how students behave outside and inside the classroom (an example MacBeath offers is to calculate how often in the day an older student is seen helping or speaking to younger ones), a time log which calculates the amount of time a teacher raises her voice in the classroom.

What is being pushed here, perhaps, is that recognising an effective teacher means using the tools at one's disposal to measure the extent to which the profiles above are obtained. A teacher may fall on the 'effective' continuum, and thus must continue to work towards becoming 'highly effective'. But this seems to me to be a purely technicist, reductive, almost nihilistic understanding of what being a teacher often constitutes, how effective teaching is recognised, and how it might relate to effective learning. Rather, the practice of teaching and its relationship to learning, I argue, is more accurately portrayed with a deeper understanding of the struggle for recognition that is often palpable in classroom practice.

But what, exactly, do I mean by 'recognition'? And how does it differ from the kind of recognition outlined above?

### 3. Recognition and Identity

When we think of recognition, we may imagine everyday instances or examples which we automatically associate with the term. Such instances include, perhaps, being recognised on the street by a friend. Our hard work and effort may be recognised and lauded through praise and applause. Other versions of recognition may be exemplified when, earlier last year, the Irish republic voted in favour of giving equal legal recognition to same-sex marriages as to heterosexual ones, an event of huge historical, social and political significance (The Irish Times, 2016). Everyday recognition may differ in accordance with one's particular social status - being stopped by police since they are recognised as fitting a particular profile of a suspect the police are searching for.

What philosophers of recognition, such as Charles Taylor, argue is that the recognition conferred on us by others is often constitutive of how we understand ourselves and our identity. Of course, there are certain conditions which make or exclude such acts of recognition from impacting on the ways in which they may be said to influence, or indeed constitute, our identity. Those recognising us must be individuals we consider as 'significant others', to use Taylor's (1992; 1994) terminology. They must be viewed as persons with the capability and authority to confer (or withhold) recognition on us. Recognition which is coerced is inauthentic and ultimately fails, as explored by Hegel in his master-slave dialectic (Hegel, 1807).

Furthermore, to consider recognition as an important facet of our identity, one needs to accept that identity is intersubjectively formed. Identity here is understood as that which is dialogical – it is not forged in isolation, but through our interaction or encounter with others, as well as the wider communities to which we belong. According to Taylor (1989; 1992; 1994), it is in such communities that we develop our 'horizons of significance', wherein which we work out and assume our identity. This identity is never entirely fixed. Rather, it is perpetually (re)formed in light of the various circumstances or situations we find ourselves in, those environments against which we struggle or to which we submit, or by virtue of different individuals we may encounter or interact with, who inevitably recognise us in a particular way (Brady, 2016). Thus, recognition occurs in particular frameworks, according to Taylor. But these 'frameworks' are not the technicist kind that are established by the inspectorate, examples of which we have seen above. Rather, these frameworks are those that allow us to understand the world in a particular way – they are the wider horizons in which we are situated, and in which we make sense of the world and our place within it. Classrooms might be understood as a site where such 'fusions of horizons' (Gadamer, 1960) occur and where, as we will see below, this struggle for recognition becomes all the more profound. Moreover, unlike the technicist kind, these frameworks are often inarticulable.

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Thus, identity is partly forged through the recognition that is conferred on us by others. However, this act of recognition does not occur in any fixed or inert sense. Since we are in constant dialogue with people, with events and with experiences 'around' us, identity (re)formation can be understood more so in terms of a struggle. Taylor (1993, pp. 32-33) illustrates this when he asserts that…

> We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others—our parents, for instance—and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live.

In order to articulate this 'struggle' further, and how it might relate to teaching and learning, let's turn now to Sartre's idea of 'the gaze' as presented in his seminal work, "Being and Nothingness" as well as an example of where it might be palpable in classroom practice.

### 4. Sartre and the Struggle for Recognition

In the section "Being-For-Others", Sartre (1943) begins by examining the feeling of being alone in a park, surrounded by things which seem to be specifically organised in a way which serves the notion of me, as a subject, being the focal point of the scene. These things are imbued with specific qualities which I consider exterior from me, things that my self-consciousness, or my 'being-for-itself', negates. Ultimately, therefore, I am the central point of reference in the scene. I am a pure subjectivity – isolated, radically free and without tension.

However, as the narrative progresses, other people begin to appear, first assuming the identity of mere objects or accessories amidst the landscape. One person, now aware of my presence, looks directly at me and suddenly, my situation is severely altered. I become aware of the existence of another frame of reference who has invaded my world, their world becoming superimposed on mine, wherein which I, consequently, then figure as a mere accessory or object. My own world begins to disintegrate entirely, and I become that which is placed at a distance from that other self-consciousness who now becomes the focal point of the scene.

This, according to Sartre (1943), is what is more commonly known as being under the gaze of the other. There is a movement from being the observer to being the observed, from being the subject in the scene to being the object for another, or to use Sartre's terminology, from being *transcendence* to being *transcendence-transcended*. I begin to feel ashamed and embarrassed. This shame acts as a limitation on my subjectivity, and I am no longer radically free as before. To counteract this, I attempt to negate the other, as I negate other objects in the world, aiming to reassert my freedom as an independent subjectivity. Yet their gaze makes me aware of the other as also negating my subjectivity, and this act of reciprocal negation remains in a state of struggle. This struggle is perpetual, and the vacillation between *being-as-object* and *being-as-subject* seems to be, for Sartre, inescapable.

What Sartre is expounding here is the struggle for recognition, conceived of as an ongoing tension between one's attempts to avoid being objectified and, in doing so, affirm one's own subjectivity. Yet with the presence of the other, the former is impossible to evade. Indeed, as Sartre (1944) would later say, 'Hell is other people.'

Can this struggle be overcome? Sartre seems to have a more despairing outlook. The only hope is, perhaps, to destroy the relation so that pure subjectivity can be achieved, which would require an act of revolt. This, however, as also refuted in his later works, seems to be unlikely, as we will always exist in the world with others (Heter, 2006). It is only through 'bad faith'

that the anguish of such limits to our freedom can be circumvented somewhat, but this, for Sartre (1943), is the defining feature of inauthenticity.

Sartre's "gaze" is certainly reminiscent of what a teacher often feels like amid an inspection. But it is also indicative of the act of teaching more generally – being observed by the students. As Standish (2014) points out, it is often through teaching that we become aware of our individual attributes or dispositions that we had not realised before – certain mannerisms we demonstrate or perhaps particular ways of speaking we had not realised. Indeed, the teacher is exposed in the classroom, and it is through this exposure that the struggle of recognition is so palpable.

Being objectified through the gaze of others might result in being seen as having a fixed sense of identity. What inspections tend to do, or are in danger of doing, is to consider the practice of a teacher as somewhat distinct from their identity *as* teachers, as something which can therefore be measured, benchmarked and compared with what is laid out in the profiles of effectiveness. This is not to deny that, of course, there are some things in education and in the practice of teachers that *can* be measured in accordance with these profiles. But to focus solely on this more technical understanding of teachers, learners, the lesson and indeed, the relationship between all of these, is to deny the struggle for recognition that is inescapably taking place, whether obvious or otherwise.

If we are to consider more technical professions, where the goals and purposes of one's job is quite clear and distinct, then the idea of fixing identity through recognition does not seem all that problematic, perhaps. If I look at a ticket inspector, in uniform, on the train, then I can trust almost immediately that that person is there to do a specific task. I can even measure the extent to which he has performed that task correctly. Has he checked all of the tickets? If he hasn't, it may be easier to judge the extent to which he is performing his duties effectively. And whilst the ticket inspector has an identity which is also subject to the struggle for recognition I have outlined above, I am less concerned about this at that moment. It doesn't seem central to the task he is set to perform, or to the ways in which one can measure how well he has done so.

What makes this so much more difficult to liken this technical idea of one's practice with the act of teaching? Unlike the train conductor, one could argue that the teacher is 'existentially exposed' in some sense. Indeed, the very identity and personhood of the teacher is on display, as well as the struggle for recognition that underpins this. This is made more salient in the process of inspection, but it is also palpable in the very act of teaching itself.

And yet, a teacher *is* often recognised as 'effective' in a similar way to the train conductor, i.e. as meeting the conditions of a particular profile. But teachers often do not adorn themselves with uniforms and wield their badge of identity in such a visible way. Sometimes they perform so as to keep this identity hidden from their pupils. Sometimes events happen unexpectedly in a classroom that puts this identity in question. Sometimes pupils misrecognise the intentions and capabilities of the teacher, as we will see below. Sometimes this misrecognition comes to be how the teacher understands her own practice, regardless of how 'accurate' it might be. Sometimes pupils purposefully withhold recognition from a teacher, in some kind of act of defiance. Profiles of effectiveness simply do not capture fully the continual relationship of recognition the teacher experiences with, and perhaps 'through', the students and the subject matter they teach, all of which is, in a sense, inexhaustible and often unaccountable. Indeed, this *recognitive relationship* often wavers and fluctuates, in accordance with particular situations in the classroom, and also with the specific content of the lesson that is being dealt

with. And this sense of dynamic recognition, one could argue, differs greatly from the kinds of reductive, technicist recognition that arise from particular forms of profiling.

Let me give an example which may help illuminate the two kinds of recognition I have thus far alluded to (See: Mehmetcan Öztürk, 2014).

It is not a rare incidence that a battle of wills is extant in the classroom, whether overtly or otherwise. In the video, we see Claudenia, a trainee science teacher who is trying to enact what she imagined would be an effective strategy to demonstrate the phenomenon of sound. So, how might an inspector with a particular profile of effectiveness consider this lesson, and what went wrong?

He might say that Claudenia is certainly a knowledgeable teacher, with quite good lesson ideas, but lacks the authority to conduct the class and direct the learning in an effective way. This lack of authority has made her less confident, and therefore, less able to get her message across. He may then offer feedback via a list of 'techniques' for evading or 'neutralising' this conflict in the future. His judgements are clearly informed by 'profiles of the good' as outlined in inspection criteria. Claudenia may be advised on certain 'classroom management' techniques, or voice projection or even confidence training. And whilst these techniques may work, albeit momentarily, they do not give due credence to the struggle that is always, inescapably taking place – the constant, perhaps, deep-seated, visceral tensions that exist between students and teachers, or the sometimes explosive contestation that both teachers and students face in their interactions with one another. This is not merely a struggle to 'win' over one another, although that also may be an important part of it. It also constitutes the struggle to be recognised as a subject, and an oscillating mêlée, as demonstrated in Sartre's park scene, which is not simply settled by employing mechanised tactics or universal methods founded upon principles such as the transference of good practice.

In the first instance, we have a neater understanding of what constitutes effective teaching, coupled with particular techniques to overcome ineffectiveness. What the framework for self-evaluation would say in response to these is that any judgements made on the quality of our practice needs to be measured. But how would such measurement look like?

Without wishing to psychologise this event and what went wrong, I would like to leave it open for discussion. Why is it that Claudenia is experiencing what seems to be a withholding of recognition from her students? Why is it that, when Mr McDonald enters the room, he manages to be immediately recognised as someone with authority, worthy of respect and attention? Does he undermine Claudenia further, through using his 'death stare' in trying to force recognition from the students? Why does Lucas feel ashamed when exposed in front of his classmates? Why isn't he more polite to Claudenia when she asks him to be? These questions are not so concerned with 'what works' or 'what was effective' in the lesson. They are not questions that fit into the technical framework of effective teaching, as outlined in inspection policy. They are not questions that can be 'measured' in any accurate way, through the collection of data and through the process of benchmarking and comparison. Rather, they are more existential questions that attempt to articulate this struggle for recognition, and are ultimately confronted with the indication that doing so is a very challenging, if not impossible, task indeed.

Partly, this has to do with the understanding that, as mentioned, teaching affects one's entire personhood in a way that if it were to be understood in a purely technical sense, would make little sense, since the act of teaching is very much embedded in the struggle for recognition

through the gaze of the other. Indeed, it is not simply that Claudenia wants to be recognised by her students, by Mr McDonald, or by us as viewers, as a good teacher, with the ability to do her job effectively. Rather, it seems as though Claudenia wants to be recognised as a person. What is the measure of that?

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, we seemingly have posited two very different kinds of recognition. One may be described as a 'fixed' or 'fixable' form of recognition, and relates to the kinds of profiles we often establish in order to understand the other. This form of recognition is reductive, and ultimately leads to an impoverished understanding of what teaching actually entails, which, as I have argued, is cannot be understood in a purely technicist or measurable way. Furthermore, this kind of recognition can be grievous, since it often bars a more authentic encounter with the other in the sense that our pre-determined ideas of what their identity constitutes not only fails to do justice to the intricacies of such identity, but also can harm the other themselves when such identities become adopted as their own.

On the other hand, the more ontological or 'existential' idea of recognition suggests a non-fixable struggle, wherein which such fixating of identity becomes a two-fold process, an endless, often inarticulable, fluctuation between the objectification and subjectification of oneself and the other. This, according to Sartre at least, is not something we should 'aim' for as such – it is simply how we *are* in relation to others.

Indeed, I do not wish to argue that recognition need be avoided. In fact, the acts of recognition as illuminated through the philosophy of Sartre are inescapable. Rather, they are part of the very substance of our being. One simply cannot teach without being exposed in some way, and this exposure necessarily involves sometimes subtle, sometimes more obvious, struggles for recognition that are inexorable and, often, inexplicable. What Sartre describes is facets of our everyday life, in that they examine the deep and important ways that the presence of the other continually (re)configures how we understand ourselves and who we are.

Perhaps it is not just the inspection systems that need to change, per se, but also the kinds of ideals they enforce on teachers and, by virtue of that, students. Instead of offering techniques or tips for conflict resolution in classrooms, we must allow the participants to live with such tensions. Or it might be that such techniques need to be 'updated' or 'experimented with'. But even 'tried and tested' techniques do not always work in every situation. And part of this has to do with the minutiae of the relationship between teachers and learners, a relationship that very much encapsulates a struggle for recognition as I have indicated above. How can such a struggle be measured? And, if it cannot be measured, how can we evaluate its effectiveness? More importantly, why should we? These are all pertinent questions that in the seeming urgency of inspection policy often become lost.

And yet, 'la lotta continua' regardless of what new techniques, policies or profiles we introduce.

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