

Investigating the Limitations of Pedagogical Inspection From the Point of View of Middle and High School Teachers in Morocco

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Abstract: This study is based on the quantitative research I have conducted with the aim to investigate the role of education inspectors in the Moroccan educational system, notably middle and high school. In general, the study is an attempt to discuss how valid the work of an inspector is to positively impact the performance of public-school teachers. As such, the different parts of this paper all work together towards two main objectives. One is to describe the frequency of visits an inspector has for a certain teacher every school year, and the other is to test the satisfaction rates of teachers with regards to the impact inspectors have on their teaching. I hypothesize that inspectors do not have enough contact with the teachers they are in charge of inspecting and developing, and that teachers negatively approach the role of inspectors as officers whose main mission has long been falling off the goal of improving the effectiveness of teachers.

Key words: Inspection – Pedagogy – limitations – supervision – middle/high school

Introduction

The success of any educational system relates, by and large, to the professionalism of the personnel who are directly and/or indirectly operating in the system. Amongst these are administrators, teachers, advisors, and, of course, inspectors. By working collegially together, these education employees can guarantee the quality teaching and learning every nation aspires for and invests in. However, and considering the Moroccan school context, it seems that the role of inspectors is quite debatable, not to say problematic. This is for a number of reasons; of these, this research investigates the very low contact teachers have with inspectors and the mediocre impact teachers think inspectors have on their teaching performance when, though low, this contact happens.

Literature Review

Reviewing the literature that is relevant to pedagogical inspection as a topic and as an issue leads to loads of interesting findings. However, it is quite mandatory to begin with identifying the concept of pedagogical inspection before plunging into the issues that it entails, especially the ones I am investigating in this paper. Yet, before talking about inspection, it should be of importance to discuss supervision as a concept that inspection is oftentimes compared with.

A sound and right definition of supervision provides, it “is what school personnel do with adults and things for the purpose of maintaining or changing the operation of the school in order to directly influence the attainment of the major instructional goals of the school” (Harris, 1963, p. 11). Two key roles of a supervisor can be induced from this quote; the first is to maintain the effectiveness of the already effective teachers and to improve the effectiveness of those who are still struggling behind. In clearer terms, “supervision is a process for stimulating teacher growth to the end that better learning experiences are provided for children” (Hicks, 1960, preface).

Of equal importance to supervision, the literature highlights the concept of pedagogical inspection. It is defined as “a process of assessing the quality and/or performance of schools by external agents” (Brian Wilcox, 2000, p. 10). Key to this definition is the externality of the agent who does the pedagogical inspection and the assessment mission he/she comes for. However, inspection “is never only an instrument of accountability – it has always assumed, as a potential consequence, the improvement of the institution inspected” (p. 10). It is within this mindset that the Moroccan Superior Education Council (2009, p. 3) supports the claim that “pedagogical inspection is, indeed, a vital tool for the continuous improvement of our system of education and training and an effective follow-up mechanism for the success of the Moroccan School.”

Nevertheless, a group of Moroccan inspectors at the Inspectors Training Center for Education in Rabat wondered as to whether to say “inspector or auditor.” Their study led them to the conclusion that “the current trend leans to audit rather than hardline control” and that the education inspection in Morocco “could take this trend adapting its control activities with the practice of accompanying” (Mohamed Essaoudi et al, 2015 p. 326). In fact, they argue the way inspection is framed in Morocco “is absolutely not implemented in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Italy or Romania. This conclusion strongly supports the fact that supervision rather than inspection should be the mission of pedagogical Moroccan inspectors. In this research I will be using the terms ‘inspection and inspector’ in reference to the practice and practitioners of the profession. Actually, Moroccan public schools do not receive supervisors but inspectors and, in fact, the title ‘inspector’ is the official term used to describe the employee exercising this job.

The literature also presents important criticisms for pedagogical inspection in the traditional sense it is practised in many countries, including Morocco. One of these criticisms is that inspectors are too meticulously and aloofly concerned about the teachers’ conformity with the official dictations, “rather than focusing on the improvement of their teaching practices” (Yekhlef and Tazi, 2005). One ultimate result to this is that inspection becomes a source of stress and anxiety for teachers instead of being a source of knowledge and expertise that would positively impact their effectiveness as creative teachers.

Inspectors, a survey revealed, cause this feeling in teachers because they are “aloof and imposing” as they believe that the inspection grid they come to class with “provides evidence and objectivity;” consequently, this survey found “92% of teaching staff experienced anxiety during the inspection process” (Colette Gray and John Gardner, 1999, p. 15). The same survey shed light on the problem of the validity of inspection. It concluded the majority of “secondary-level school respondents (58%)” and more “than half of the primary schools (63%)” (p.11) claimed the inspectors they received were “intruding upon and disturbing the normal working of the school” (p. 10).

As such, it is quite safe to claim that pedagogical inspection faces serious complications to achieve the goal of improving the achievement of teaching staff. This claim is the core of our hypothesis, which provides, in other words, inspectors do not really help teachers improve their teaching skills and their impact, provided there is some, is very limited in size and in quality. To test this hypothesis, I requested answers for the following four questions:

1. Is there enough inspector-teacher contact in the Moroccan middle and high schools?
2. Do inspectors have any positive influence on the effectiveness of teachers?
3. Would more inspector-teacher contact positively impact the teachers’ skills according to teachers?
4. Are Moroccan teachers satisfied with the way they are inspected?

Method

This study is quantitatively designed to investigate the role of pedagogical inspectors in the improvement of the achievement of middle and high school teachers in Morocco. The study was conducted in two main parts with one targeting descriptive data while the other focused on relational data. A stratified group of high school teachers (n = 40) was identified. All of them had at least 15 years of teaching experience. We believed this criterion would allow us to validly test the number of contacts teachers had with

their inspectors. Contact is not limited to classroom visits alone but it considered workshops, meetings, demo-lessons and even electronic and phone professional communication. The objective was to rigidly chronicle the contact frequencies teachers have with their inspectors and quantitatively conclude the extent of influence this contact has on the participants.

As for data collection, I started with a literature review to identify the different types of contact an inspector could have with the teachers they inspect. The emerging types offered the basis of the questionnaire which I used in the survey. The objective at this level was to identify the types of contact inspectors had with the participants and whether they are enough or not. The participants had to identify the type of meeting they had with their inspectors and check the number of times they had during the last 15 years of their teaching career. To describe the frequencies and convert them to percentages, I used an SPSS frequency analysis table graph.

The second part of the questionnaire tested the type of influence inspectors had on the participant using an SPSS descriptive analysis.

In addition, I conducted a correlational study to test whether the participants expected the increase of the number of inspector-teacher contacts would positively influence the effectiveness using a phone interview based on a questionnaire I shared by email (see appendix C and D). I had interviewed 20 participants by guiding and explaining to them what they had to do to respond properly to the questionnaire. In fact, most of my interviewees found some difficulty to understand what they were requested to do and that was mainly why I opted for the phone calls.

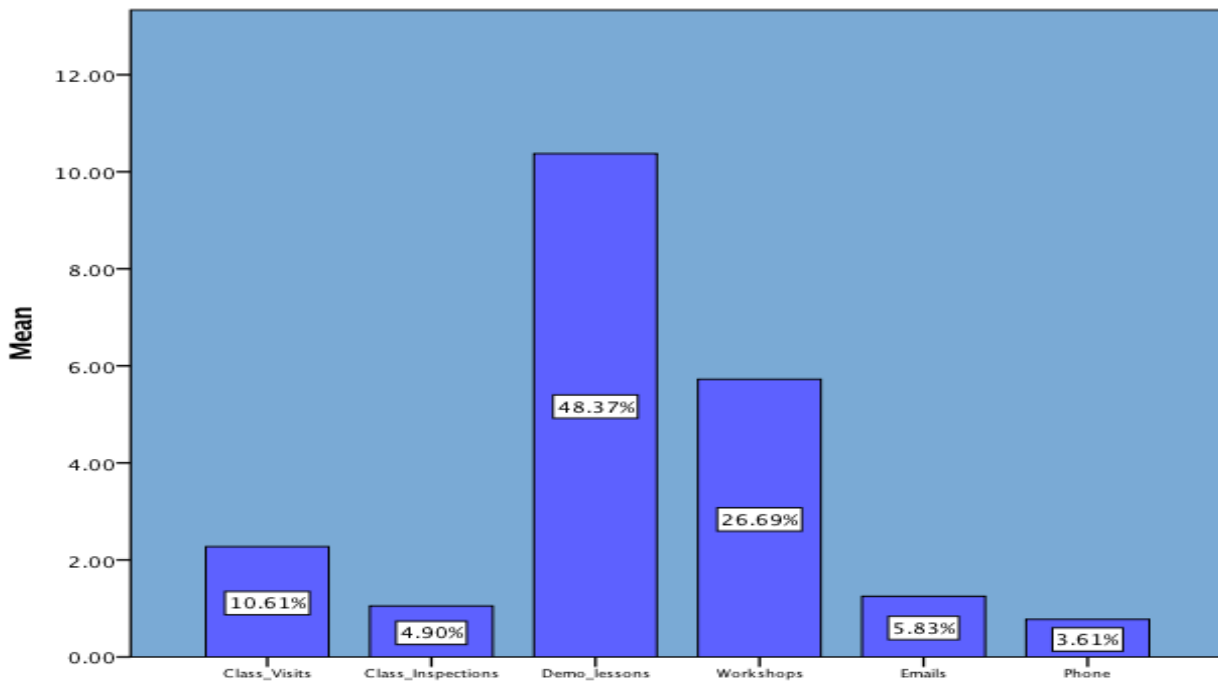
The data collection and the analysis tools were guided to serve the testing of four main hypotheses:

1. The contact between teachers and inspectors is very low;
2. Inspectors have very little impact for the majority of teachers;
3. More inspector-teacher contact will positively impact the effectiveness of teachers;
4. The majority of teachers are not satisfied with the way they are inspected?

Results

Figure 1 descriptively displays how often my sample had a contact with their inspectors along a period of 15 years (2003-2018). Contact frequencies concerned the number of class visits, class inspections, demo lessons, workshops, emails, and phone calls. Demo lessons scored the highest by reaching about 48% of the global contact rate. It was followed by workshops which made almost 27% of inspector-teacher contact. Class inspections and class visits, which are of paramount importance for both the teacher and the inspector together did not exceed 15%. I am saying these are of paramount importance because I am approaching inspection from a traditional stand; for inspectors, class visits and class inspections are the only measures to inspect and appraise teachers while they are performing their job. For teachers, class inspections and class visits are important because inspectors write reports to describe their teaching and give grades to evaluate it. An inspector grade is, for example, key in the promotion of a teacher.

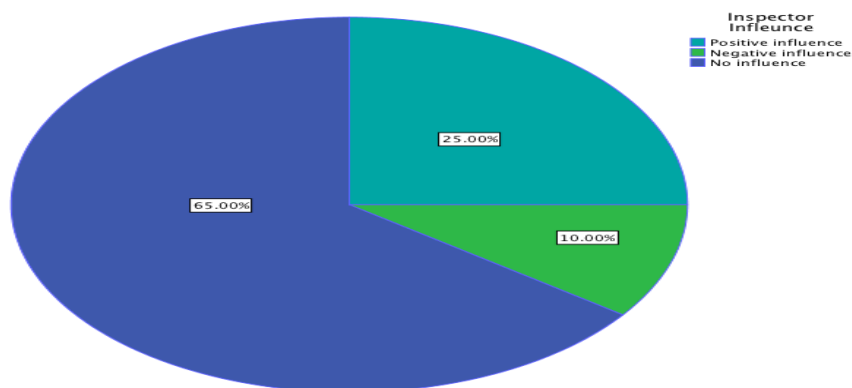
Figure 1: Descriptive statistics on inspector-teacher contact during a period of 15 years.



The same graph depicts the occurrence rate of each of the variables during the concerned period. For instance, the highest number of demo lessons a teacher attended in the presence of an inspector was 10 demos, while the highest number of inspections were never beyond 3 times as the graph portrays. This responds to my hypothesis that there was not enough inspector-teacher contact, which I will discuss later in this paper.

Figure 2 describes the relation between pedagogical inspection and the effectiveness of the participants from the point of view of the latter group. This considers all the types of contact I used in the previous test (class visits, class inspections, demo lessons, workshops, emails, and phone calls). Clearly, the great majority (65%) of the teachers participating in this study said inspectors had no influence on their teaching whatsoever.

Figure 2: The type of influence inspection has on teachers.



My findings at this level made it indispensable for me to add a correlational test in which I needed to check whether the participant who said inspectors had no influence on their teaching thought there would be some positive influence provided the inspection rate

increased. I conducted a correlational analysis to test the relationship between these two variables all by depending on the opinion of the sample. The result as the table below shows was that the participants believed that the increase of inspector-teacher contact would result a rise of positive effect on their effectiveness. The Pearson’s r for the relationship between the two variables is significantly positive at 0.905.

Figure 3: The expected positive relationship between the inspector-teacher contact rate and teachers’ effectiveness.

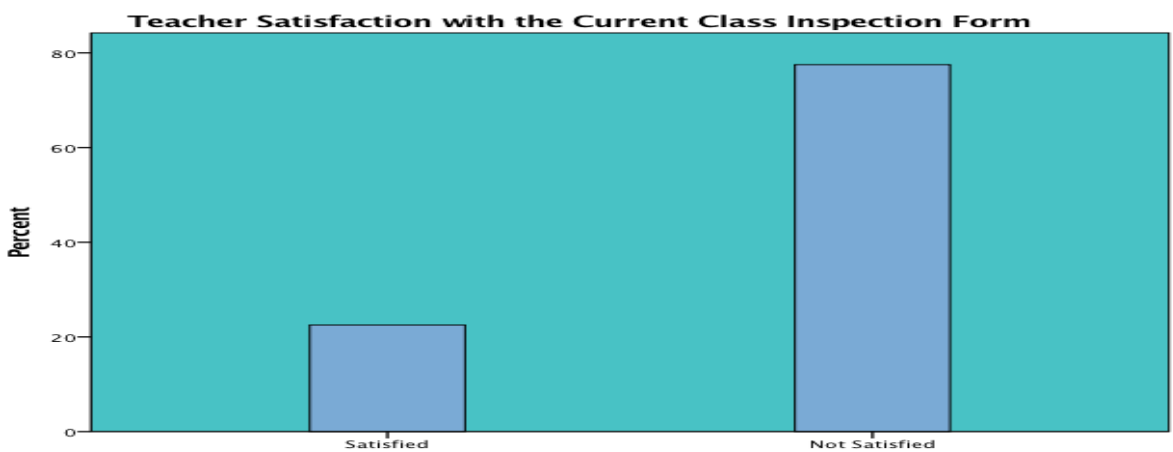
Correlations

Correlations			
		Number of meetings per year	Positive influence increase rate
Number of meetings per year	Pearson Correlation	1	.905**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Positive influence increase rate	Pearson Correlation	.905**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The last question this study invoked targeted the satisfaction of teachers from the current inspection tradition, regulations as well as the behaviors of the inspectors themselves. The findings clearly indicate how unsatisfactory class inspections are for the great majority (about 78%) of the participants.

Figure 4: Teacher Satisfaction with the way they are inspected while teaching.



Discussion

The results of this paper support all the four hypotheses I aimed to test. From within the point of view the teachers I had as my sample: The inspector-teacher contact is not enough to meet the teachers' expectations (hypothesis 1), the pedagogical inspection activities do not positively impact the effectiveness of Moroccan teachers (hypothesis 2), teachers expect their effectiveness would increase provided the number of contacts they had with their inspectors increased (hypotheses 3), and teachers are not satisfied with the way they are inspected (hypothesis 4). Each of these results support the general idea that the way pedagogical inspection is handled in Morocco is quite problematic in the sense that it does not serve the objectives it is planned for. Central of these objectives is the continuous and systematic pedagogical support for middle and high school teachers to improve their effectiveness, which will certainly serve the quality education Moroccan students need and deserve.

The fact that the inspector-teacher meetings, in all types and forms and as the findings of this paper indicate, are way less than 20 times per teacher in a period of 15 years is quite of an issue. This certainly justifies why the great majority of the participants strongly believe inspectors have no influence on their teaching skills; for this positive impact to happen, there needs to be a constant and stable meeting rate between middle and high school teachers and their inspectors. In my case as a middle and high school teacher, I have had only 2 class inspections and 1 visit in 16 years. Also, the fact that almost 78% of teachers are not satisfied with the way and the frequency they are inspected means there is a problem of inspection in Morocco. During one my interviews, a middle school French teacher who is supposed to take the professional promotion test still has the low grade an inspector gave her 12 years ago, which limits her chances to pass the test. Thus, the findings of this study reveal there should be an urgent reconsideration and reevaluation for the pedagogical inspection in Morocco.

More importantly, the problematic implications of pedagogical inspection is not new and is not limited to Morocco. As the literature review indicates, this issue has been persisting since the 60s and concern even developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. In the U.S., for instance, inspection is "thought to be more frightening to teachers, and too hierarchical in its assumption" and that is why the concept "inspection is not used" (James. Learmonth, 2001, p. 121). Consequently, my assumption about the limitations of traditional inspection the way we have it in Morocco is strongly valid. Instead, the literature reveals countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and Spain have replaced inspection by supervision, which is most of the time done at the school level.

Conclusion

Considering the literature review and the findings from the tests this study implemented, the way inspection is done in Morocco is problematic, at least from the point of view of teachers. This problematic orbits three sub-issues: one is that teachers and their inspectors do not meet enough; another is that even when they meet the pedagogical activities inspectors come with do not meet the expectations of the teachers; and the other is that the relationship between teachers and their inspectors is not healthily approached, at least from the point of view of the teachers themselves. As such, it is justified, in the light of the findings of this paper as well as other research about the issue, to argue that the whole inspection profession in Morocco needs to be revised. Then, the findings of this quantitative study can be invested in to implement a qualitative endeavor to explain and work out valid solutions to the problematic of inspector-teacher relationship, which has been persisting in our education despite the many reforms the Moroccan consecutive governments have implemented to treat this problem.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information about the participants in this study

Participant ID	City	Years of experience	Subject taught	School Level
1	Rabat	16	English	Middle School
2	Rabat	34	Religion	Middle School
3	Rabat	15	English	High school
4	Rabat	32	Arabic	High School
5	Rabat	16	Arabic	High School
6	Rabat	18	English	High school and middle school
7	Rabat	20	Maths	High school
8	Rabat	20	Maths	High school
9	Rabat	18	Maths	High school
10	Rabat	16	French	Middle school and high school
11	Rabat	18	French	High school
12	Rabat	15	English	High school and Middle school
13	Sale	21	Physics	High school
14	Sale	33	Physics	High school
15	Sale	22	Physics	High school
16	Sale	15	English	Middle and High school
17	Sale	18	English	High school
18	Sale	16	English	High school
19	Sale	24	English	High school
20	Sale	17	Maths	High school
21	Sale	30	Religion	High school

22	Sale	28	Religion	High school
23	Temara	15	English	Middle school and high school
24	Temara	18	English	High school
25	Temara	17	Arabic	High school
26	Temara	24	L&ES	High school
27	Temara	16	English	Middle school and high school
28	Tamesna	18	English	High school and university
29	Casablanca	19	English	High school
30	Casablanca	15	English	High school
31	Mohammedia	16	English	Middle school and high school
32	Tangier	18	English	High School
33	Tangier	20	English	High school
34	Zagoura	17	English	Middle school and high school
35	Sefrou	24	English	High school
36	Meknes	16	English	High school
37	Sidi Kacem	16	English	Middle school and high school
38	Sidi Yahya	18	English	High school
39	Kenitra	21	English	High school
40	Kenitra	16	English	Middle school and high school

Appendix B: Inspector-teacher contact rate questionnaire

Please write the number of contacts you have had with your inspector during the last 15 years with regards to each of the activities.

Activities	Number of occurrences in the last 15 years
Class visits	
Class inspections	
Demo lessons	
Workshops	
Emails	
Phone calls	

Appendix C: Expectations of teachers about the positive influence of the increase of inspector-teacher contact.

Please choose a number of inspector-teacher contacts per year and the percentage of influence you expect it will have on your performance as a teacher. You can write as many answers as you want in the middle cell (**Your answer**).

Number of contacts per year (all type of contact)	Your answer	Positive Influence percentage Expectation
1		0%
2		5%
3		10%
4		15%
5		20%
6		25%
7		30%
8		35%
9		40%
10		45%
11		50%
12		55%
13		60%
14		65%
15		70%
16		75%
20		80%

Appendix D: Samples of recorded interview to survey the expectation of teachers from the increase of contact with their inspectors using the table in appendix C above.

Sample 1:

Interviewer: Do you want to have more or less contact with the inspector?

Participant: Less.

Interviewer: Can you check a number of yearly contacts you would like to have with your inspector from the table?

Participant: 2 times if necessary.

Interviewer: Can you now check the percentage of positive influence your inspector will have on your teaching if you meet him or her 2 times per year?

Participant: 5%

Sample 2:

Interviewer: Do you want to have more or less contact with the inspector?

Participant: More of course.

Interviewer: Can you check a number of yearly contacts you would like to have with your inspector from the table?

Participant: Twice per month... so that's about **16 times** per year... I know it's impossible because inspectors don't have just us...

Interviewer: Can you now check the percentage of positive influence your inspector will have on your teaching if you meet him or her 16 times per year?

Participant: More than **80%** influence of course. It depends on the inspector and the type of contact, though.

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