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School autonomy with accountability reforms in Madrid: From instrumentation to policy enactment

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study the recontextualisation of School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) reforms as a global education policy, translated and enacted in a subnational context. More specifically, the thesis analyses the instrumentation, impacts and enactments of SAWA policies in Spain, with a particular focus on the region of Madrid.

SAWA policies aims to reform education systems by combining major levels of decentralization and school autonomy with novel policy instruments of accountability and evaluation, with the ultimate aim of improving the efficiency and efficacy of education systems (Verger et al., 2019; Sahlberg, 2016). This model emerged under the tenets of New Public Management (NPM) during the 1980 in the Anglo-Saxon world, but has been disseminated in countries without managerial administrative traditions. This is the case of Spain, where school evaluation has been developed incipiently under a bureaucratic approach. However, since the 2000s, different Spanish regions have adopted external accountability mechanisms and governance reforms. In Madrid, SAWA policies have been implemented together with open school choice schemes in a relatively diversified quasi-market of educational providers. Overall, the introduction of accountability mechanisms to regulate a quasi-market education system has contributed to consolidate a governance shift towards a post-bureaucratic educational model.

Under this policy context, this thesis analyses the instrumentation of SAWA reforms not only to gain a better understanding of the motivations, rationales and trajectories of the reforms but also to identify and analyse their main impacts and enactments. Adopting a multi-scalar approach, this thesis addresses the policy selection and adoption of accountability tools from a macro level of analysis; its main impacts regarding the interschool dynamics in the local education markets from a meso level of analysis; and its policy enactments at the school level from a micro analysis.

The methodological strategy follows a case study approach, combining data sources and research techniques of a diverse nature, including qualitative interviews with policymakers and stakeholders (n=35), analysis of policy documents (n=12), interviews with teachers and principals (n=54) and survey responses of teachers (n=844) and principals (n=179).

This thesis uncovers some interesting results at the different levels of analysis. From the macro level, the results show how international policy models and global discourses are gaining centrality in the diffusion of SAWA policies. However, their translation in the local and national context is contingent to diverse political, administrative and cultural factors. In Madrid, the SAWA reforms were adopted following international models, but they did not reach further consolidation due to political and administrative hindering factors, especially

regarding the public dissemination of the standardised test's results. However, the test has been redefined and lasted together with school choice policies, generating important external competitive pressures that schools face adopting diverse logics of action in a vertically segmented education market. At the school level, this thesis illustrates how the components of the accountability mandate are differently enacted in the schools. Moreover, the results suggest that when school actors do not believe in the adequacy or fairness of the accountability system, they tend to decouple formal structures from real school practices.

This thesis has important implications for policy and research. The results point out that when implemented in vertically differentiated education systems and under broad school choice regulations, SAWA reforms may contribute to further intensify school segmentation and, hence, limit the possibilities of improving those schools in more disadvantaged conditions, thus undermining the cohesive and levelling role of education and reinforcing its reproductive functions.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This thesis analyses the recontextualisation of accountability and school autonomy reforms in the education sector, with a focus on the case of Spain and more particularly on the region of Madrid. The aim of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how and why a global education reform is being translated and tailored to a particular local space and to analyse the trajectories and enactments of accountability policy tools and their impacts on school actors' behaviours and relationships. This thesis has been developed in the context of the Reformed Project, a comparative research analysing the global dissemination of School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) reforms and their translation and recontextualisation in different countries[1]. The thesis is based on a compendium of publications, which include four academic articles published in indexed and peer-reviewed journals in the fields of education policy.

Global Education Policies and the SAWA Reform Agenda

During the last decades, accountability has become a global norm in the education policy field (Lingard, 2013). In the context of globalisation, the scales, actors and range of education policy are being deeply redefined. Policy ideas are globally disseminated and travel across the globe (Peck & Theodore, 2010). However, global education policies change in their journeys, and more specifically, they are translated in local and national spaces according to cultural, economic, political and administrative context specificities (Steiner Khamsi, 2014).

The knowledge economy is creating new challenges for states and their educational systems. In the current context, economic and political interdependence prevail while the pressures education systems face to respond to the demands of a competitive world economy increase, resulting in 'some common policy trends [that] can be observed in one form or another in most OECD countries, including decentralisation, school autonomy [and] greater accountability for outcomes' (OECD, 2013).

This international scenario is reshaping and redefining the role of education and its relationship with the state. In parallel, new policy actors and spaces of governance have emerged and are altering the conventional scales and mechanisms of policymaking, with supranational spaces of coordination, such the EU (cf. Papanastasiou, 2019) or international organisations (IOs), like the OECD, playing a more active role in the educational policy arena. Under the lead of these and other IOs, new international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) of students have emerged, such as PISA or TIMMS. These assessments frame the public debate on the need to improve the quality of education and the performance of education systems, with a particular focus on their measurement and comparison.

[1] See www.reformedproject.eu

Within global education policy spaces, education systems are called to provide students with new competences to respond to the needs of a changing global society. These processes have resulted in reform pressure as well as policy approach oriented towards improving the rationalisation, efficiency and quality of education. This approach has been labelled as "Global Managerial Education Reforms" (Verger & Altinyelken, 2013) or, more generically, as the "Global Education Reform Movement" (Sahlberg, 2014). This reform approach has a paradoxical character in the sense that it not only suggests promoting major levels of school autonomy and decentralisation but also implies certain forms of standardisation due to the implementation of accountability mechanisms based on standardised tests and related performance-oriented management tools. This policy model can be named as School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA). As a reform package, the SAWA reform is strongly influenced by global education reform ideas and relays on the implementation of National Large-Scale Assessments (NLSA) as the pivotal policy instrument that allows the articulation of major levels of decentralisation in the school governance, the definition of a set of learning standards and the establishment of mechanisms of accountability (Verger et al., 2019). Indeed, various international bodies have disseminated SAWA policies, especially the OECD, which has considered them as a desirable policy combination with positive effects on the performance of education systems (OECD, 2011).

SAWA policies are inspired by the New Public Management (NPM), a public sector reform paradigm with a high impact in the field of education. NPM suggest the need for modernising the management of public services with the aim of improving their results through the introduction of dynamics and mechanisms of the private sector, seeking to improve efficiency and effectiveness while reducing bureaucracy and transforming the relationships between public sector actors (Gunter et al., 2016; Verger & Normand, 2015). Although there is a great diversity of political configurations in which this paradigm can crystallise, it is necessary to underline a set of fundamental principles of NPM in the field of education: 1) the professional management of the public sector; 2) an explicit definition of performance standards and measures; 3) a greater emphasis on the control of results; 4) a trend towards the disaggregation of administrative units in the public sector; 5) major levels of competition in the public sector; 6) an increasing emphasis on private sector management practices and styles; and 7) greater control and discipline in the use of resources (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2013, p. 215).

Policy solutions—such as greater levels of school autonomy, market-oriented education systems or external mechanisms of performance evaluation—are part of the range of policies that come together under the NPM approach, with the aim of improving efficiency through competitiveness and accountability (Verger & Curran, 2014, p. 256). Alongside school-based

management policies, this model emphasises the freedom and power of families in school choice, a greater community participation in school life, an increasing attention to performance as well as the deterioration of the principles of teacher collegiality (Tolofari, 2005, p. 88). However, NPM reforms cannot be analysed as a monolithic proposal, since their implementation and recontextualisation in different countries diverge according to a set of multiple factors of a political, economic and cultural nature, among others (Verger & Normand, 2015, p. 604).

The development and consolidation of NPM reforms have resulted in educational transformations at different levels. On the one hand, according to Ball (2003), managerial education reforms are carried out through the policy technologies of the market, the management and the performativity; they imply a redefinition of the teaching profession, changing not only what teachers do but also what it means to be a teacher in current times, hence reconfiguring their professional identities and the entire role of education in modern societies. On the other hand, such a reform agenda has implied a redefinition of the role of the state in education and public policy. In contrast to the idea of neoliberal reforms as a strategy to reduce the presence of the state, managerial models are reconfiguring and redefining the core functions and roles of the state, shifting from central state provision to an evaluative and coordination role, what some have called the 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1998). In a similar vein, some scholars have referred to the notion of 'post-bureaucratic governance', which emphasises the emerging role of the state as an evaluator agent within quasi-market environments (Maroy, 2009).

Decentralisation, Devolution and School Autonomy

The post-bureaucratic governance approach assumes that part of the failure of education systems may be attributable to an excessive centralisation, bureaucratisation and standardisation of procedures, as these are related to management inefficiency. Therefore, a devolution of the responsibilities of provision to smaller administrative units is understood as part of the solution: school provision and governance are decentralised, while school autonomy is enhanced to ensure a more relevant education adapted to the needs of different contexts, students and families. Under this approach, school autonomy appears to be an emerging policy model in which the authority to decide on diverse aspects of education should lie at the school level.

According to Eurydice (2007), schools might be considered fully autonomous when they are thoroughly responsible for their decisions according to a given regulatory framework and without the intervention of external bodies (Coghlan & Desurmont, 2007, p.17). However, school autonomy is often presented both as a magic bullet solution and as an umbrella

concept. It is often constructed as a sort of empty vessel, which most interested parties and stakeholders may be in favour for. Conservative actors may advocate for a model of autonomy giving more professional power to principals; liberal positions tend to use it as a policy tool aiming at diversifying the school offer; and progressive actors tend to support a pedagogical approach to school autonomy as a tool to promote more relevant education and progressive pedagogies. A common distinction among approaches is between managerial and pedagogical school autonomy due to their implications for teachers. The managerial approach is based on a more hierarchical governance approach to schools, in which more power is given to the principals to the detriment of teachers, whereas the pedagogical autonomy approach emphasises the professionalisation and agency of teachers (Verger & Normand, 2015, p. 603).

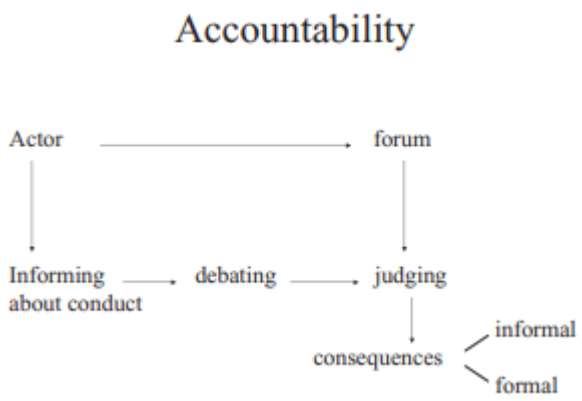
The concept of school autonomy is more complex and nuanced than the way reformers and policymakers tend to present it. A proper conceptualisation allowing for a systematic approach to the concept involves identifying various dimensions of autonomy. Following Cribb and Gewirtz (2007), we can distinguish between the *loci and modes of autonomy* (i.e., the agents exercising different kinds of autonomy), *the domains of autonomy* (i.e., the dimensions in which autonomy is exercised) and the *loci and the modes of control* (i.e., control agents and how they exercise such control). According to these different dimensions, school autonomy may involve different actors and dimensions having important implications for policy and politics. Moreover, school autonomy policies are not usually adopted in isolation but together with other policy instruments, which aim at restructuring school governance, including school choice schemes or accountability policy instruments.

Accountability Policies in Education

The introduction of market-style policy solutions into education systems involves the decentralisation of education systems, giving more pedagogical and/or organisational autonomy to schools in order to diversify the offer in a free school choice environment. As a counter part of such school autonomy, accountability policy instruments have become a central piece of the post-bureaucratic governance model. In order to balance and monitor the increasing levels of school autonomy, policy technologies and accountability mechanisms have emerged as forms of 'governing at distance' (Rose & Miller, 1992). Accountability is therefore intrinsically related to the notions of power, autonomy and authority, in the sense that it refers to 'the interaction, in a hierarchical relationship, between those who have power and those who are delegated authority' (OECD, 2015, p. 483). According to Ranson (2003) accountability is a 'social practice pursuing particular purposes, defined by distinctive relationships and evaluative procedures' (p. 462).

Bovens (2007) defines accountability as a specific form of social relation between a forum (the account holder) and an actor (the account giver). In this relation, the actor has the obligation to inform and explain their conduct; the forum can judge and pose questions, and the actor may face some sort of formal or informal consequences (Bovens, 2007). In the case of administrative accountability, schools, teachers and principals are actors who may justify their conduct—usually in terms of students' performance—to the public authorities, which act as the main forum. Eventually parents and/or the media may also act as a forum, especially under market forms of accountability (in which school choice is allowed and school scores are published and ranked). Bovens summarises the different relationships established under accountability regulations with the figure below.

Figure 1: Accountability as a relational concept



Source: Bovens (2007)

The existing literature distinguishes between 'low-stakes' and 'high-stakes' accountability models based on the nature of their impacts. Accountability instruments are understood as 'high-stakes' or 'hard' when their results are used to make relevant decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools or districts (Madaus, 1988, in Au, 2007, p. 258). According to some authors, the policy mandates of high-stakes accountability contribute to reframe what it means to be a good school or a good teaching professional; they redefine the role and practice of education towards a narrower vision of teaching—one that is increasingly oriented to testing and focusing on limited instrumental skills (Lipman, 2004). In contrast, accountability instruments are considered 'low-stakes' or 'soft' when there are no formal and explicit consequences—whether as sanctions or incentives—attached to the test results. In these cases, the accomplishment of learning standards and the improvement process relies on the reflexivity of local school actors (Maroy, 2015). This distinction is

relevant in this thesis, as the case analysed presents an erratic policy trajectory. It evolves from a higher-stakes model with a market orientation towards new forms of less impact with administrative and managerial hybridisations, despite maintaining its market orientation determined by free school choice schemes.

Besides this formal definition of accountability, multiple concepts and labels have been developed to analyse and describe different forms and policies of it on the ground. Harris and Herrington (2006) distinguish between government-based accountability and market-based accountability, while other authors use more specific categories, such as test-based accountability (Hamilton et al. 2002), referring to testing as the main instrument, which enables current and specific forms of accountability in education. Ranson (2003) distinguishes between two different phases of accountability, namely, the 'age of professionalism', characterised by professional accountability, and the 'age of neoliberalism', characterised by multiple forms of accountability, which include 'consumer accountability' and 'performative accountability', which are described as mutually reinforcing (Ranson, 2003, p. 463). Focusing on the associated sanctions generated by education accountability arrangements, West et al. (2011) analyse the multiple forms of accountability in England and highlight the predominance of hierarchical (administrative based) and market models of accountability in detriment of participative and network forms of accountability.

Accountability systems are, hence, complex policy solutions with multiple approaches and perspectives, according to different dimensions, which include aspects of principal-agent relationship (who is accountable and to whom) elements of nature (for what aspects of the conduct), extent (to what levels) and impact (with what consequences). According to these dimensions, education accountability can be used in different alternative approaches, which include professional, market or managerial forms of accountability, among other classifications (Leithwood et al.1999; Leithwood & Earl, 2000).

Despite multiple classifications, the accountability policy designs are not pure and often imply important levels of hybridisation of different components. The notion of performance- based accountability (PBA) appears to be particularly useful to identify different policy arrangements and instruments of accountability, as it is characterised by a focus on student performance as the core component of accountability in education. In this sense, PBA can contribute to consolidate new forms of accountability regulation, which focus on the outputs rather than on the inputs side of education. PBA is a model defined by four main elements: (i) the definition of a given set of learning standards; (ii) an external testing system based on such standards; (iii) a model of dissemination of test results to certain actors; and (iv) a particular scheme of incentives and consequences (Maroy & Pons, 2019, p. 57).

PBA should be understood as an 'assemblage of formal and informal procedures, techniques and tools', which are a constitutive part of a broader process of *datafication* in education (Grek, Maroy & Verger, 2020). Such an assemblage goes beyond the implementation of mere technical devices; instead, it involves powerful policy instruments aimed at reconfiguring education and public policy (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007; Grek et al., 2020).

Analytical and Theoretical Approach

This thesis is structured by three different research strands, following a multi-scalar analytical and theoretical approach (Maroy & Pons, 2019), and two transversal analytical perspectives. In each level of analysis, the thesis addresses different aspects of the same object of study: the recontextualisation of SAWA policies in Madrid. The macro level studies the adoption and trajectories of accountability reforms in Madrid, focusing on how and why accountability policy instruments have been adopted and how they have evolved. The meso level focuses on the impacts of accountability reforms in the interschool dynamics and schools' logics of action. The micro level analyses the enactment of accountability mechanisms in schools, focusing on the process of interpretation and translation, studying the dynamics of alignment and decoupling. Each of these empirical angles is informed by different theoretical approaches as it is specified below.

Macro Level: The Policy Adoption and Trajectories of Accountability Policy Instruments

The macro level of analysis of this dissertation addresses the adoption and evolution of accountability reforms in Spain and Madrid. It uses a plural theoretical toolbox, combining sociological and political science disciplines, and is informed by two main perspectives: the multiple streams framework (Kingdon, 1989) and the policy instruments approach (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007).

The multiple streams framework (MSF) addresses the process of policy change through the analysis of different dimensions—namely, the problem stream, the policy stream and the politics stream. The problem stream refers to the identification of an issue that needs to be addressed by public policy. In this sense, this dimension refers to the process of problem framing and construction. The policy stream refers to the potential solutions that can be developed in order to address a given problem. Finally, the politics stream refers to the set of political and socio-cultural elements that facilitate or hinder the policy process. Accordingly, policy change takes place when the three streams come together, opening a window of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to advance their reform agendas. It is important to stress that the MSF does not suggest a linear or a functional approach—in the sense that the

different streams do not refer to sequential moments. As a matter of fact, Kingdon (1989) stresses that in the process of policy change, solutions often chase problems, which challenges the more rational choice approach that suggests policymaking is based on identifying what works. In any event, the MSF appears to be a proper analytical heuristic tool to explore the process of policy change regarding the adoption of accountability reforms in Spain as it is developed in the first paper of this compilation, which analyses the adoption and trajectories of accountability reforms in Madrid and Catalonia.

The second theoretical perspective used to analyse the adoption and trajectories of accountability reforms in Madrid is the policy instruments approach. From a political sociology perspective, the policy instruments approach presents a deep theoretical analysis of the multiple techniques of government and governance, focusing on the devices that make power operational (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). This perspective aims to overcome functionalist approaches to public policy and its related assumptions of public policy choices as a rational and neutral process. Instead, the policy instruments approach aims to problematise policy tools and techniques as instruments of government. Accordingly, policy instruments are understood as social institutions defining particular power relations as condensed forms of knowledge, as well as ontological and axiological conceptions of reality (Le Galès, 2010). In this sense, and according to the seminal definition of Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007), policy instruments are social and technical devices regulating social relations between governing and governed actors (p. 4). Applied to the study of accountability, the policy instruments approach would suggest problematising and analysing the emerging power relations generated around testing and its related changes in the modulation of different actors' behaviours, the development of new practices and the new meanings and conceptions that these changes imply for education (Grek et al., 2020). A second contribution of the policy instruments approach refers to the concept of *instrumentation*— understood as the process of instrument choice, development and implementation as well as its effects in specific spheres of action. Overall, the policy instruments approach is applied in the second paper of the thesis, with a particular focus on the concept of instrumentation. Moreover, and though in a more collateral way, the notion and conceptions carried out by the policy instruments approach also resonate in the third and four paper of this thesis, which focus on the meso and micro levels of analysis.

Meso Level: The Impacts of SAWA and Market Pressures on Schools' Logics of Action

The intermediate level of analysis of this thesis focuses on the impacts of accountability mechanisms in interschool dynamics and interdependences, something that is specifically addressed in the third article of the compilation. At the meso level, this dissertation analyses

how market forms of accountability generate competitive interdependencies and particular schools' logics of action, which to a great extent need to be read both as a response of schools to the changing regulatory environment and as a function of their market hierarchy position. Informed by the existing literature on new forms of regulatory governance in Europe (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Maroy & van Zanten, 2009; van Zanten, 2007; 2009), this thesis analyses the different ways schools behave under market and accountability regulatory environments, according to the different underlying adaptive mechanisms and logics of action they deploy.

As noted in previous sections, diverse forms of accountability can be observed in education systems. This level of analysis contemplates the interaction between forms of market accountability—understood as the relationship between parents (as clients) and schools (as providers) in education systems regulated under free-school choice mechanisms—with emerging forms of administrative accountability and school autonomy. Under this policy model, school autonomy is oriented to diversify the school offer and make school systems more plural, while PBA becomes a tool to promote not only governmental quality control but also school choice. Parents make choices according to their preferences, and schools compete to attract and retain students under first-order or second-order competition logics (Gewirtz et al., 1995; van Zanten, 2009; Moschetti, 2018). For their part, schools develop different practices and activities to deal with these competitive dynamics.

Hence, this level of analysis is particularly interested in the reactions and behaviours of schools as response to 'client' or 'market accountability' within SAWA regimes. To develop such analysis, this thesis uses the notion of schools' logics of action, which is understood as the schools' leading orientations towards market dynamics. The existing literature suggests that schools react and respond with a set of different activities, practices and routines, which can be reconstructed ex-post facto as a coherent response or as organisational behaviour (Ball & Maroy, 2009).

The interest of this topic in the thesis is threefold. First, paying special attention to market forms of accountability helps to address the complexity of multi-layered accountability policy arrangements, which include, but go beyond, administrative forms of accountability. Second, studying interschool dynamics gives us a better understanding of the impacts of accountability reforms in education, with a particular focus on the schools' competitive interdependencies and their impacts in terms of equity. Finally, understanding how schools react to market external pressures with interdependent behaviours provides us the opportunity to draw a better picture of the complex interplay between policy adoption and policy enactment as well as the mediating role of local factors therein.

Micro Level: Accountability Enactments in Schools

The micro level of analysis focuses on the specific forms of enactment of accountability policy tools in schools. According to enactment theories, policy implementation should not be analysed from a linear perspective—in the sense that the policies are never implemented as foreseen by their policy designers. A flat or mechanistic conception of implementation should not be taken for granted (Ball et al., 2012). Instead, the notion of policy enactment is used to analyse the process of recontextualisation, de-codification and negotiation of policy meanings and messages at the school level. From this perspective, policy enactment is about 'putting policies into practice' in a 'creative, sophisticated and complex but also constrained process' (Braun et al, 2011, p. 586). Policy enactment can thus be defined as the process of activating and making work certain policies in a given context. Therefore, policy enactment involves both the interpretation of policy messages and their translation into specific actual practices in a situated context, which could act as a barrier and/or as a trigger of specific policy reconfigurations.

The perspective of policy enactment is combined with neoinstitutionalist theories, which highlight the salient role of institutions, which are broadly understood as a set of rules, norms, expectations, cognitive frames and beliefs that can either facilitate or constraint public action and policy solutions. In this sense, the neoinstitutionalist approach suggests that policy mandates, such as the ones attached to accountability policy instruments, could be more or less aligned or decoupled from organisational routines, values and activities (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). From this perspective, this thesis analyses the policy enactment of accountability reforms and disentangle the institutional factors which intervene in this process. Moreover, this research also addresses to what extent the organisational practices at the school level are aligned with the policy expectations as defined in the policy design.

Altogether, the micro level of analysis addresses different elements in the last paper of the compilation. First, it examines how school actors interpret and make sense of different accountability policy tools. Second, it studies how school actors deal with different accountability pressures. Finally, it analyses how schools translate accountability tools into specific school practices, with a particular focus on alignment and decoupling dynamics.

Transversal Analytical Perspectives

From a vertical and crosscutting point of view, this thesis follows two main analytical principles: realistic evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) and the ontological perspective of critical realism (Danermark et al., 2002; Porpora, 2015).

From the point of view of critical realism, the work of the social sciences is to disentangle and understand the generative mechanisms of a given phenomenon or object of study. Critical realism appears as an alternative approach to positivism, on the one hand, and post-structuralism, on the other. While positivism suggests that science can only attend to empirical and observable facts, poststructuralism assumes that reality is just a reflection of particular and relative points of view. As a response to such divergent positions, the critical realist approach suggests building a more complex ontological perspective—that is, reality does exist independently of our knowledge and conscience, but there also exists a 'socially determined knowledge about reality' (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 6) and different understandings of it. Accordingly, critical realism suggests that reality is structured and stratified in different dimensions. Such levels refer to the empirical, understood as the experimented facts, the actual, the things that happen whatever experimented or not, and the real, understood as the set of structures, powers, tendencies and mechanisms that make things happen. From this stratified conception of reality, a given social phenomenon may exist without being visible (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 43). In fact, we observe events and facts, but these are determined by non-visible structures and generative mechanisms. The main task of social sciences is to grasp the underlying mechanisms beyond specific events and to understand and explain why things happen. In order to do so, critical realism locates in the centre of social science the process of concept abstraction and *retroduction,* which is a way to interpret and explain reality with causal explanations. This process can identify the necessary conditions and the basic prerequisites for a phenomenon to exist and can be combined with deductive and inductive forms of thinking about how and why a particular phenomenon exists (Danermark et al., 2002).

In this thesis, we adopt the perspective of critical realism to identify the underlying mechanisms beyond the adoption and the particular forms of enactment of SAWA policies in Madrid. The papers in this compilation implicitly adopt this critical realist perspective to address different aspects of the policy recontextualisation of accountability instruments and highlight the different mechanisms in place. Because of limited space, the papers do not address the critical realism perspective as an explicit analytical approach, but it does so in the form how different theoretical and empirical issues are addressed in the different articles.

As part of critical realism, realist evaluation is an analytical perspective that aims to bring the principles of critical realism into the field of policy analysis and evaluation. From the point of view of realist evaluation, policy should be understood as a particular conception of human action. Policy programmes are hypotheses about human nature and our social forms of action and interaction. From this point of view, a proper analysis of policy programs should address, as a preliminary step, the identification of the policy ontology behind the programs in

question. Different policy programs are sustained in diverging conceptions of human action. For example, market-oriented policy solutions assume a conception of human action as a utilitarian in nature and driven by profit maximisation. Hard accountability mechanisms consider school actors to act under strategic, rational and utilitarian logics, whereas soft forms of accountability rely on reflexive school actors who are moved by social interests (Maroy, 2015). Therefore, analysing the assumptions, objectives and expected mechanisms of programs is necessary to determine to what extent they practically work or not, and why. From a realist evaluation perspective, policy programs are treated as hypotheses of how humans behave under specific circumstances. Testing whether such hypotheses work or not is the core task of evaluation. This does not mean that realist evaluation analyses whether a policy works or not in the abstract but to what extent the assumptions and mechanisms of a program work, under what circumstances, for whom and with what consequences (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

In this thesis, the realist evaluation approach is applied at the level of the policy adoption and enactment. Particularly, the second paper of this compilation applies the policy instruments approach, emphasising the policy assumptions, objectives and mechanism of test-based accountability. The theoretical links between the policy instruments approach and realist evaluation are based on the critical examination of policy beyond its formal design. From this perspective, the second paper addresses, among other things, the policy ontology and the policy rationale of accountability reforms in Madrid. Yet from the perspective of policy enactment, this research also analyses how accountability instruments are made operative in schools and studies to what extent the enactment of accountability policy tools is aligned to its associated policy design, as it is discussed in the fourth paper of this compilation.

Objectives and Research Questions

The general objective of this thesis is to analyse, from a multi-scalar and qualitative approach, the recontextualisation of accountability reforms in Spain, with a particular focus on the case of Madrid. In order to do so, the thesis aims to shed light on different aspects of the process of policy recontextualisation; it examines the adoption and trajectories of SAWA reforms, their impacts on interschool dynamics as well as the school-level enactments of accountability tools. The objectives of the thesis are aligned with the research framework and approach of the Reformed Project, as the primary research context in which this thesis has been conducted.

This thesis aims to study the complexities of the policy process and to identify different sources of policy inspiration, the global drivers and mechanisms involved in the process of dissemination, the mediating factors of adoption and the local enactments of a global policy

solution. To address this interplay, the thesis adopts a multi-scalar approach, as it has been presented in the analytical section. Accordingly, the specific objectives and the research questions addressed in the papers compiled in this PhD dissertation are distributed across the different levels of analysis, as outlined in Table 1.

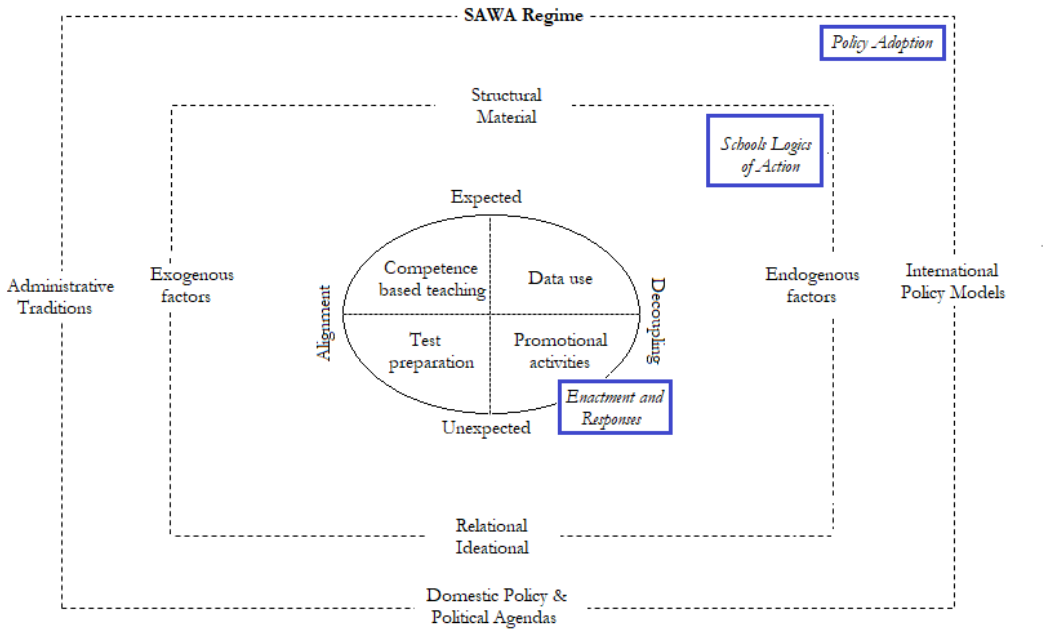
Table 1: Objectives and research questions

Level of Analysis	Objectives	Research Questions
Macro	1. Study post-bureaucratic governance reforms in education in the context of Madrid, with a focus on the adoption of accountability policy instruments and on the cultural, political and administrative factors intervening therein.	1. What are the policy ontologies and rationales behind recent educational reforms in Madrid? 2. What is the policy trajectory of accountability policy instruments in Madrid? 3. What factors and mechanisms explain the uneven implementation of accountability policy instruments in Madrid?
Meso	2. Identify the diverse factors explaining the schools' position in the local education market. 3. Uncover the predominant logics of action that schools articulate in response to both the most immediate competitive pressures they face, and their position in the marketplace. 4. Analyse the main tensions that emerge when schools navigate between contradictory and diverse sources of pressure.	4. What are the main underlying factors explaining schools' logics of action to adapt to post-bureaucratic modes of governance? 5. What are the predominant logics of action that schools articulate in response to the competitive pressures they face? 6. How are these logics of action related to schools' positions in the marketplace? 7. What are the main tensions that schools with different logics of action experience when responding to market pressures?
Micro	3. Analyse how school actors interpret the accountability policy mandate and translate it into daily school practices.	8. What are the main cognitive frames and forms of interpretation of accountability instruments? 9. How do school actors experience different forms of pressure associated with administrative and market forms of accountability? 10. What are the main school-level practices associated with the enactment of accountability policy instruments? 11. To what extent are the policy expectations of the accountability mandate aligned to schools' practices?

Model of Analysis

The research questions and the objectives defined are addressed in this thesis following the model of analysis presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Analytical model



This model of analysis covers the object of study, the different analytical levels and the concepts and key elements addressed in the thesis. The macro level of analysis refers to the process of policy adoption, which configures a specific SAWA regime according to diverse international policy models, the limitations of the administrative traditions and the particular interests of local actors with their own policy agendas. Altogether, conform a specific SAWA regime that affects the governance of the education system and consequently the interschool dynamics and the school logics of action taking place in the local education spaces. This analytical level refers to the meso approach, in which the thesis studies the schools' logics of action and the adaptive mechanisms that emerge under competitive interdependence environments. This level of analysis is expected to be mediated by exogenous and endogenous school factors as well as material and ideational spheres. Finally, in the micro level, the school enactment and responses to accountability arrangements are analysed according to the notions of alignment and decoupling while focusing on four main school practices: competence-based teaching, external test data used for improvement purposes, test preparation activities and promotional activities.

Methodological Considerations

This thesis adopts eminently a qualitative methodological strategy to study the recontextualisation of accountability reforms in Madrid from a multi-scalar perspective; it also deploys a plural research toolbox, mainly combining inductive and *retroductive* logics and triangulating different data sources.

A Case Study Approach

This thesis analyses SAWA reforms in Madrid from a multi-scalar perspective. More specifically, the methodological strategy relies on a qualitative case study approach. Although the thesis uses survey data, the quantitative data sources are employed to complement and to be triangulated with qualitative results. The thesis develops a case study approach, understood as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 37). Case studies have been also defined as 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Accordingly, case studies can be labelled as intrinsic (interested in a particular case by itself) or instrumental (oriented to understand something else beyond the case). This thesis primarily follows an intrinsic logic, focusing on SAWA reforms in the context of Madrid. However, it also adopts an instrumental approach, since the case presented is aimed at gaining a better understanding of how global education policies are recontextualised and translated to practically work on the ground by the mediation of local school actors.

A shared assumption of case study methodology is the plurality of sources of information and research techniques used to define and explain the case in-depth. According to Creswell & Poth (2018) a case study can be defined as follows:

> A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study). (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 153)

In a similar vein, Yin (2003) defines case study research as 'a methodology to study a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Following Yin, we can distinguish different types of case studies with different designs according to the cases addressed and the units of analysis studied. Specifically, we can distinguish the following case study designs:

- *Single case with holistic design:* when the focus of the investigation is a single specific case with a single unit of analysis in a given context.
- *Single case designs with embedded units of analysis:* when the focus of the research is given to a single case but with different embedded units of analysis sharing the same context.
- *Multiple cases with holistic designs:* when the research addresses the same unit of analysis in different cases with particular contexts.
- *Multiple cases with embedded units of analysis:* when the research addresses multiple cases with particular contexts and multiple units of analysis.

This thesis combines, in the different analytical levels, two kinds of research designs: the single case with holistic design and the single case with embedded units of analysis. The case of the thesis is the recontextualisation of SAWA reforms in Spain, with a focus on the region of Madrid. For the macro level, which studies the adoption and trajectory of accountability reforms in Spain, two papers are included. The first paper provides a comparison between the trajectories of accountability reforms in Madrid and Catalonia and, hence, adopts a single case design (the adoption and trajectories of accountability reforms in Spain) with embedded units of analysis (Madrid and Catalonia). The second paper of the macro level focuses on the case of Madrid and adopts a single case holistic design. Finally, the two papers addressing the schools' logics of action and the enactment of accountability reforms in schools both adopt a single case design with embedded units of analysis (which, in this case, are the different schools included in the sample).

Data Gathering and Sampling

The data used to inform the case study analysed in this thesis come from three main sources: in-deep semi-structured interviews, document analysis and survey responses. The use of different techniques as well as sampling and data gathering strategies differs according to the level of analysis.

For the macro level of analysis, the main sources of data rely on a combination of interviews and analysis of policy documents. Regarding the interviews, I reached key informants, educational stakeholders, policy makers and top-level politicians. The interviews were conducted face to face and followed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Fontdevila, 2019). The sampling of the interviews followed a snow-ball chain-referral sampling method, which is seen as an appropriate strategy to conduct elite interviews (Tansey, 2007) and reach field saturation. The interviews were combined with document analysis, including policy and legal documents, reports, press releases, public statements and parliamentary debates.

Table 2: Interviews with key informants and policy documents

Data Sources	Number
Qualitative interviews with top-level politicians	5
Qualitative interviews with experts and academics	5
Qualitative interviews with educational stakeholders	11
Qualitative interviews with members of teacher unions	3
Qualitative interviews with government advisory committee	3
Qualitative interviews with policymakers	8
Parliamentarian debates	3
Education regulations and legislation	5
Press releases	2
Reports from education authorities and public hearings	4

In the meso level of analysis, the thesis relies on qualitative interviews and data from an original survey (see Levatino, (2021)). The survey was administered to principals (n=179) and teachers (n=844) from 91 Spanish schools, sampled in the regions of Madrid and Catalonia, two of the most urbanized areas in Spain. The survey data comes from the fieldwork done within the Spanish case of the Reformed Project, which includes Madrid and Catalonia, and involved a broader team of researchers. The survey data are used to build an index of the local education market position of the schools, based on the complete sample, and to characterize the main school practices and responses. Moreover, the data analysis particularly focuses on a sub-sample of Madrilenian schools, which were also studied with qualitative interviews with teachers (n=24) and principals (n=26).

The micro level of analysis relies on qualitative interviews combined with document analysis of school documents and websites as well as preliminary observations. The schools were selected following a purpose sampling strategy in order to cover schools with different characteristics according to several elements (e.g., socioeconomic status of schools and type of provider). In each school, I interviewed the principal and other members of the leadership team and teachers from tested and non-tested subjects when possible.

Table 3: Interviews in schools

School	Provider	SES	Teachers	Principals
A	Public	Low	3	1
B	Public	Low	1	2
C	Public	Med-low	2	1
D	Public	Med-low	2	2
E	Public	High	3	3
F	Public	Med	3	2
G	Public	Med	1	2
H	Private Subsidised	High	3	3
I	Private Subsidised	Med	2	2
J	Private Subsidised	High	2	2
K	Private Subsidised	High-Med	3	3
L	Private	High	0	2
M	Private	High	2	2
Total			27	27

During the research fieldwork in schools, I asked for a school visit, in order to make some preliminary observations about the school infrastructure, the common spaces and the

classrooms. Although these visits were not possible in all the schools, they were transcribed as fieldwork notes to triangulate with the interview data when possible. Finally, the interviews and the preliminary observations were complemented and triangulated with the document analysis of school documents, such as improvement plans, educational projects, promotional flyers and school websites. The selection of the school documents was flexible and uneven, according to their accessibility and the schools' predisposition to share internal documents, implying that in some schools the documental information was richer than in others.

Instruments and Data Analysis

For all the different levels of analysis, the interviews followed a tailored semi-structured interview protocol covering different topics. For the macro level of analysis, the interview script was organised according to different streams defined by Kingdon (1984) and other complementary dimensions. Specifically, the interview protocol in the policy adoption level was organised according to the instruments designed in the Reformed Project (see Fontdevila, 2019) and was structured as follows:

- Personal background: warming-up module to start the interview and contextualise the interviewee.
- Policy formation: focused on the policy adoption and the policy formation process addressing the problem, policy and political streams. The objective of this module was to make sense of the different political, cultural and socioeconomic factors influencing the policy formation process.
- Policy enactment: focused on shedding light on the translation and impact of accountability reforms in schools and to address the policy context, the different levels of autonomy, the main school-level changes, the schools' reception and the subjective opinion of accountability instruments.
- Knowledge mobilisation: focused on the role of ideas and knowledge in the policy process, analysing the main actors, strategies of influence and sources of policy inspiration.
- Concluding questions: asked interviewee for other potential actors to interview in order to follow the snowball strategy.

The interview protocol was adapted to the case of Madrid with particular questions and contextual specificities. The objective of this protocol was to cover different elements of the policy process; the script was adapted to the different interviewees according to their knowledge of the reform process, their level of involvement and their degree of participation.

Regarding the meso and micro levels of analysis, a same interview protocol was used, covering topics regarding the different levels. The scripts were adapted to teachers' and principals' interviews and were structured as follows:

- Personal background: basic information about teaching and roles developed in the school.
- School context and culture: aimed at gaining information about the school context, the student population, the social and geographical environment of the school, recent relevant urban changes, etc. Yet this module also asked for elements related to the 'school culture', understood as the pedagogical and organisational ethos, the collegial dynamics and the decision-making process and leadership style.
- Accountability pressures: a central module of the interview focusing on addressing the different sources of accountability pressure as well as the subjective opinions concerning the accountability policy instruments, personal performative experiences, and the importance of results in the school or the potential consequences of poor performance.
- Data use and responses: interviewees asked about how they use the data of accountability policy instruments in the school, how this data influence their teaching work and the different forms of result dissemination and communication.
- Administrative accountability: a module focused on analysing the role and responses of the administrative account holder—namely, the educational authorities and the school owner—as well as aspects of administrative support and control
- Market accountability: the final module asking for the dynamics of market accountability related to the school external perception and reputation, the role of parents, the dynamics of parental school choice, the interschool dynamics and the responses of the school to address market demands.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed with Atlas.ti, following a list of predefined codes informed by the existing research and theory; they were then combined with emerging codes, memos and *in vivo* coding. Therefore, the analysis followed a 'directed content analysis' approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) based on a combination of predefined codes, which was informed by theory and research as well as the use of new codes emerging from the data.

Finally, the thesis uses data from the Reformed survey (see Levatino, 2021), as a complementary data source to triangulate with the qualitative interviews and preliminary observations. The survey includes school context information (i.e., reputation, competition

dynamics and demand trends), organisational and pedagogical practices as well as subjective opinions on standardised testing and school autonomy policies.

Thesis Structure and Compendium of Publications

The structure of this thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 problematise and delineate the object of study of the research. Specifically, Chapter 1 includes a general introduction on the topic, the main analytical and theoretical approaches as well as the research objective and the methodological strategy. Chapter 2 addresses the policy context of the research and describes the historical and political legacies of Spanish education, the main elements of the education governance reform in Madrid and some considerations regarding the structure and recent trends of the Madrilenian education system. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 present the main results of the research for the different levels of analysis based on the compilation of articles. Finally, Chapter 7 presents a brief summary of the global findings, discusses the main results in relation to the thesis research objectives, and provides the main conclusions.

Regarding the compendium of publications, the thesis comprises four academic articles published in indexed and peer-reviewed journals in the fields of education policy. The compendium follows the multi-level approach of the thesis and includes the following papers:

Macro-level of analysis:

> Verger, A., Prieto, M., Pagès, M., & Villamor, P. (2020). Common standards, different stakes: A comparative and multi-scalar analysis of accountability reforms in the Spanish education context. *European Educational Research Journal*, *19*(2), 142–164.
>
> Pagès, M., & Prieto, M. (2020). The instrumentation of global education reforms: An analysis of school autonomy with accountability policies in Spanish education. *Educational Review*, *72*(6), 671–690.

Meso level of analysis

> Pagès, M., Ferrer-Esteban, G., Prieto, M., Verger, A., 'Post-bureaucratic governance reforms and local education markets: Schools' logics of action, educational tensions and new forms of system segmentation' Working paper to be sumited in the British Jounral of Sociology of Education.

Micro level of analysis

> Pagès, M. (2021). Enacting performance-based accountability in a Southern European school system: Between administrative and market logics. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 1–27.

The thesis starts with two opening chapters that address the introduction of the research and the policy context (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). The results of the thesis cover the articles included in the compilation. The macro level of analysis is addressed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4; the meso level of analysis is presented in Chapter 5; and the micro level of analysis is addressed in Chapter 6. The thesis closes with Chapter 7, which summarises and discusses the main results; it provides some general conclusions and highlights the main implications of this research.

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CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT ON THE SPANISH EDUCATION AND THE GOVERNANCE REFORM IN MADRID

To better understand the object of study of this thesis, it is necessary to contextualise the case of Madrid within the framework and evolution of Spanish education in both political and historical terms. The section below presents the historical and political legacies of Spanish education, some basic information regarding the structure of education provision of the Madrilenian education system as well as the main features of the governance education reform in Madrid.

The Historical Legacy and the Policy Framework of Spanish Education

From a general perspective, the current Spanish education system is the result of diverse political, administrative and historical contingencies. Analysing the process of education reform in Spain requires a proper contextualisation of the contemporary dynamics that have dominated education policy and politics and have determined the modern configuration of the education system and its policy framework. In its early contemporary phase, the education system in Spain has been described as a 'semi-peripheral type of schooling', meaning a model with important gaps between emerging educational aspirations and actual school provision, which may imply problems of state legitimisation through education policymaking (Bonal, 1995; Bonal & Rambla, 1996).

During the Francoist regime, which lasted from 1939 to 1975, the Spanish education system was characterised by state inhibition in the universal public provision of schooling (Bonal, 2002; Verger et al., 2016). At the end of the dictatorship, public spending on education represented only 1.78% of the gross national product, which was "the lowest in Western Europe"; only 70% of Spain's 14-year-olds attended school (Hanson, 2000, pp. 14-15). Spain had at that time a very weak public system, which delegated an important part of the school provision to private and religious educational institutions. This historical trend resulted in a prominent role of the Catholic Church in education provision, especially in such regions as Madrid, Catalonia and Basque Country. In this sense, some authors have described the Spanish education system as an historical Public Private Partnership (PPP), meaning that the structure of education provision and the role of private institutions respond to historical and political trends not related to contemporary neoliberal reforms (Verger et al., 2016). This historical PPP generated a dual system of schooling, characterised by a low-quality public system and an elitist private sector (Bonal, 2000, p. 203).

With the end of the dictatorship, the first democratic governments had the challenge of developing a modern mass schooling education system aimed to overcome the shortfalls inherited from the Francoist regime. The new education system was developed under a contentious process of political transition, characterised by great social tensions and political conflict (Baby, 2018). In this context, different interest groups, broadly represented by

progressive and conservative actors, were involved in the definition of the modern education system. In brief, the conservative actors defended the interests of the private and religious sector and promoted the notion of freedom in education, while the progressive actors aimed at reinforcing the public school system under a more equity-oriented approach (Bonal, 2000). This polarisation and the need to find political compromises resulted in a basic but vague consensus, which was crystallised in the Article 27 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and is still in effect today: 'Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of teaching is recognized' (CE, 1978, p. 14). The so-called school pact was possible due to this ambiguity, which implied a very flexible interpretation of this constitutional mandate; indeed, it would be interpreted according to political and ideological preferences of subsequent governments (Bonal, 2002; Olmedo, 2008).

In parallel, the institutional and political structure of the state was redefined under an important reform of administrative and political decentralisation, which can be explained by external international pressures and political internal dynamics related to demands for more political autonomy in some regions (Engel, 2008). Such internal and external policy dynamics resulted in a process of educational decentralisation, which was intrinsically related to the contemporary formation, trajectory and structure of the education system. As noted by Engel (2008): 'The reinvention of the Spanish state (Engel, 2007) and the construction of a mass education system generate and are clearly generated by processes of decentralization' (p. 406). Currently, Spain could be defined as an education system based on a 'regional autonomy within a centralized framework' (OECD, 2013), and other researchers highlight that such policy framework has generated a 'de facto federalist educational structure' (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018). Indeed, the expansion and consolidation of the welfare state in Spain took place together with a process of territorial decentralisation, resulting in significant regional differences in welfare policy options (Gallego & Subirats, 2012). Beyond decentralisation, another key issue to understand the politics of education policy in Spain is the political polarisation between conflicting and persisting educational interests, which were configured during the democratic transition (Bonal, 2000). Between 1980 until 2015, the Spanish political scene, and by extension the education debate, was dominated by a bipartisan system, which involved an alternation between conservative and social-democratic forces, with eventual alliances with regional nationalists, mainly Basques and Catalans. This bipartisan model is the root of the dualisation of the education policy debate, which was already present in the constitutional debate. Accordingly, the social-democratic laws tended to privilege more equity-oriented education reforms, involving more participatory approaches and comprehensive educational models. In contrast, the conservative reforms enhanced the principles of freedom, promoted measures of educational specialisation and reinforced values

of effort and excellence in education (Prieto and Villamor, 2018). Such polarised positions represented the interests of different conflicting stakeholders and generated a regulative and legislative overproduction at the national level (Bonal, 2000), resulting in seven basic education reform acts since the restoration of democracy.

Some authors have highlighted that the last conservative reform[2] implied the adoption of neoliberal discourses in the field of education, which had been disseminated and promoted by conservative think tanks, such us the FAES Foundation and its policy networks (Olmedo & Santa Cruz, 2013). Inspired by these approaches, this education reform introduced the main principles of the NPM (Parcerisa, 2016) and new forms of endogenous and hidden privatisation with the articulation of different policy technologies, including the adoption of testing and standardisation, the promotion of school choice and informational mechanisms as well as the development of managerial forms of school autonomy (Saura & Muñoz Moreno, 2016). This reform would had resulted important changes in the governance of education in Spain, although its final implementation did not succeed at the national level. The more polemic aspects of this reform, precisely related to a model of high-stakes accountability, were dismissed at the central state level.

Indeed, Spain is a country with a no relevant tradition in managerial governance reforms, neither in education nor in other public services. Consequently, school autonomy and accountability mechanisms are not at the core of education reform in Spain, even though they have gained more centrality over the last few decades. In fact, some authors have called Spain a country with a Napoleonic administrative tradition (Ongaro, 2008; 2010), implying a hierarchical, centralised and bureaucratic public administration with great emphasis on law, formal procedures and standardisation. This administrative legacy has partially hindered the adoption of managerial approaches to education, with important implications for the adoption of accountability mechanisms, which have been normally adopted in those counties with a quality assurance approach instead of a NPM rationale (Verger et al., 2019). School evaluation mechanisms were incipiently introduced in Spain during the 1990s. However, the territorial decentralisation of education implied a diversification of the school evaluation model with multiple orientations but with an emerging tendency towards the use of standardised tests and an increasing focus on school performance (cf. Tiana, 2018). Indeed, different accountability mechanisms and school autonomy measures have been introduced recently at the subnational scale in different Spanish regions, including Madrid (Prieto &

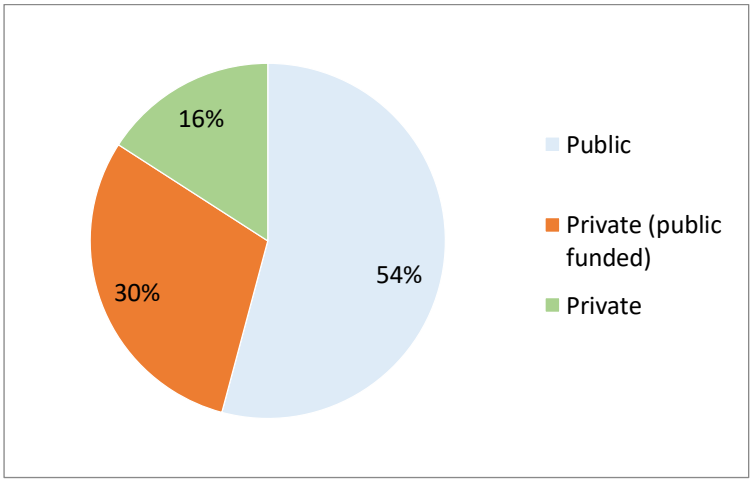
[2] I refer here to the last conservative education reform, which was passed in 2013 and was the law in force, despite including some important changes in the accountability framework, when the fieldwork of this thesis was conducted. Currently, a new education reform with a social-democratic orientation has just passed in the Spanish Senate on 23 December 2020. The changes this reform introduces are not included in this contextual section because its approval is posterior to the thesis fieldwork.

Villamor, 2016), Catalonia (Verger & Curran, 2014) and Andalusia (Luengo & Saura, 2012). This thesis aims to develop further knowledge about the case of Madrid—a pioneering region that has introduced accountability mechanisms in one of the most market-oriented education systems in Spain.

The Education System in Madrid: Recent Trends and Main Characteristics

The education system in Madrid is characterised by an important diversity of school providers. Following the historical trend that characterises Spain as a traditional PPP, we find a salient presence of public schools that coexist with privately subsidised schools as well as totally private ones. If we analyse the distribution of providers in non-university education, we observe more than half of the students are enrolled in public institutions, whereas the rest are distributed between privately subsidised schools and totally private ones.

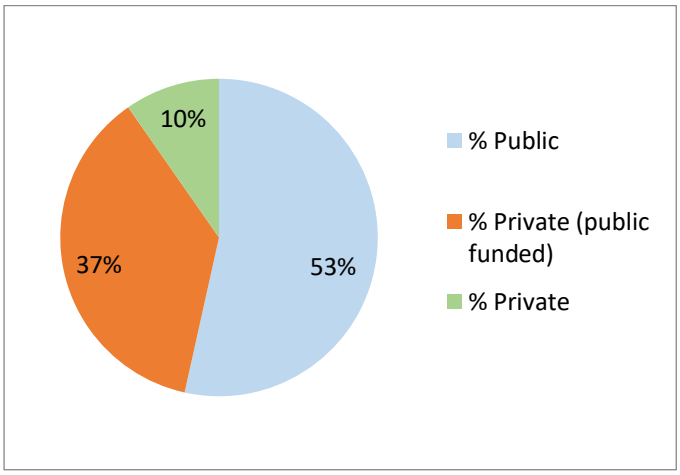
Graph 1. Student enrolment in non-university education and primary education according to school providers in the Community of Madrid (2019–2020)



Source: Datos y cifras de la educación 2019 – 2020 (Consejería de educación y juventud)

This general trend is similar if we focus only in primary education, although we observe a major presence of privately subsidised schools but less importance for totally private institutions and to a lesser extent, public schools.

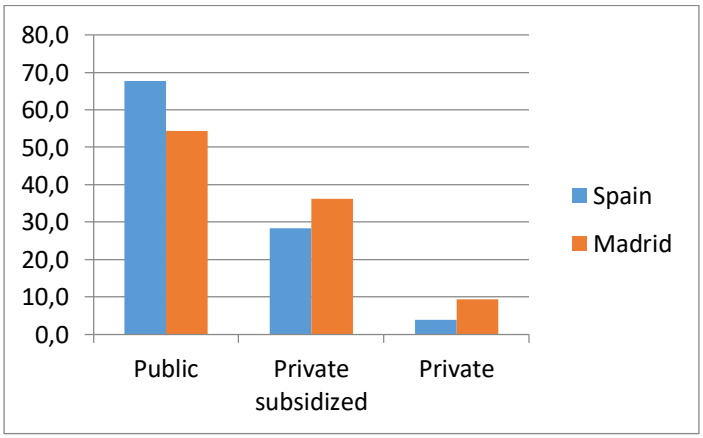
Graph 2. Student enrolment in primary education in Madrid according to school providers



Source: Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (2018–2019)

The distribution of school providers in Madrid slightly differs from the national trend, in which the public sector is stronger, the private subsidised network is weaker and the totally private sector is almost residual, especially in specific regions. As can be observed in Graph 3 the levels of privatisation in primary education in the region of Madrid are higher compared to the rest of the country; hence, the levels of diversification are also more acute in Madrid.

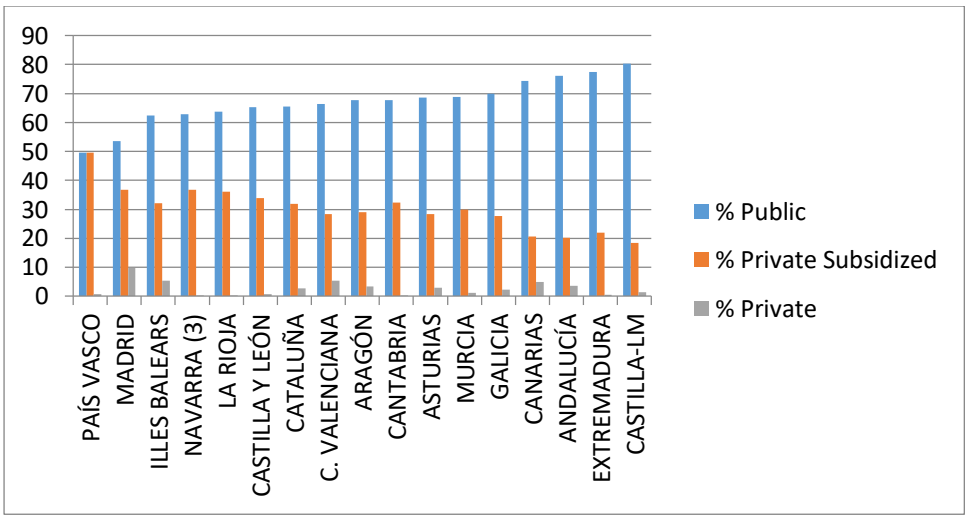
Graph 3. Student enrolment in primary education according to school provider (2018–2019)



Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional

If we analyse this trend from a sub-national regional perspective, we observe that Madrid is one of the regions with higher levels of private institutions, only surpassed by the Basque Country, a region with a history of private subsidised schools. The relative importance of totally private schooling is also a particular characteristic of Madrid, especially in comparison to other Spanish regions where this kind of provision is inexistent or almost marginal.

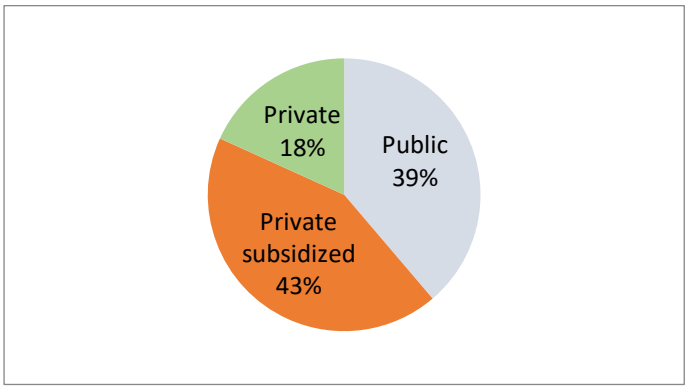
Graph 4. Student enrolment according to school provision and Autonomous Communities



Source: Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (2018-2019)

Moreover, the distribution of student enrolment among different school providers presents significant changes if we observe the same data in the city of Madrid. In Madrid Capital, the student enrolment in general education of non-university courses is higher than in the private subsidised network, surpassing the public sector. Moreover, the totally private schooling is even more important, reaching 18% of the student enrolment in non-university education. Accordingly, public schools in the city of Madrid are subsidiary to the private network, representing only 39% of student enrolment.

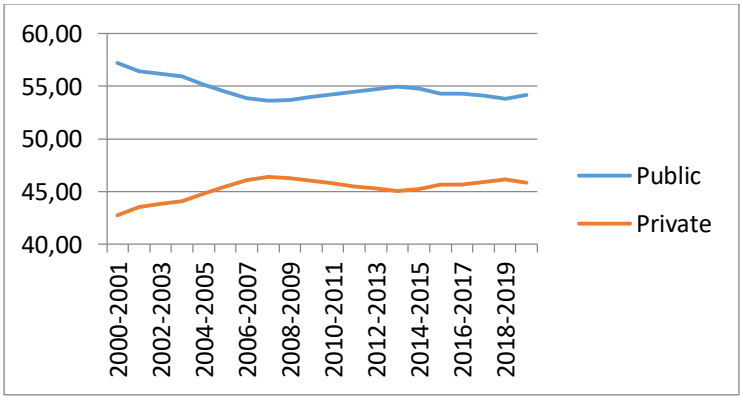
Graph 5. Student enrolment in non-university education according to school providers in Madrid Capital)



Source: Banco de datos del Ayuntamiento de Madrid: Consejería de Educación y Juventud de la Comunidad de Madrid

If we observe such distribution in historical terms in the Community of Madrid, we observe a slight decrease of public schooling accompanied by an incremental rise of the private sector during the first decade of 2000s, which stops when the economic crisis begins in 2008, implying a certain gain of student enrolment in public schools during the subsequent years. However, with the economic recovery, private schooling increases again. Overall, during the second decade of the 2000s, we witness a certain stagnation of this privatisation trend, and a certain stabilisation is observed, with 46 % of students in the private sector and 54% in the public network.

Graph 6. Student enrolment in general education according to school providers in Madrid (2000–2020)

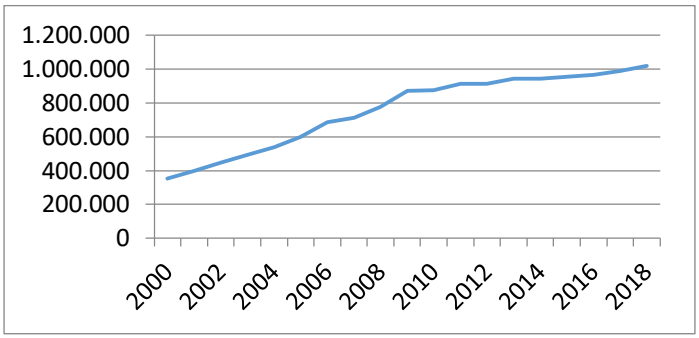


Source: Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional.

This trend can also be observed if we analyse the funding of private subsidised schools, which has shown an incremental rise during the last two decades. This process could be explained by demographic factors and demand-side effects, but it could also be attributed to the public

policy agenda based on increasing school diversification and support for the private subsidised education network.

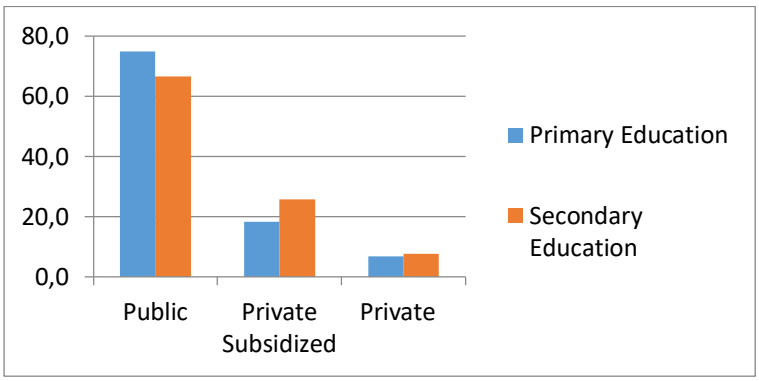
Graph 7. Public funding of private subsidised schools in Madrid



Source: Estadística del gasto público en educación, series temporales. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional

As happens in other Spanish regions, such diversification of school providers represents a challenge in terms of equity, especially for the uneven distribution of immigrant populations between different providers. As can be observed in Graph 8, a large percentage of migrant students are enrolled in the public sector, while private providers assume a subsidiary role enrolling migrant students, especially in primary education. Accordingly, in primary education, almost 75% of the migrant student population is enrolled in public schools.

Graph 8. Migrant student population in Madrid according to provider and education level



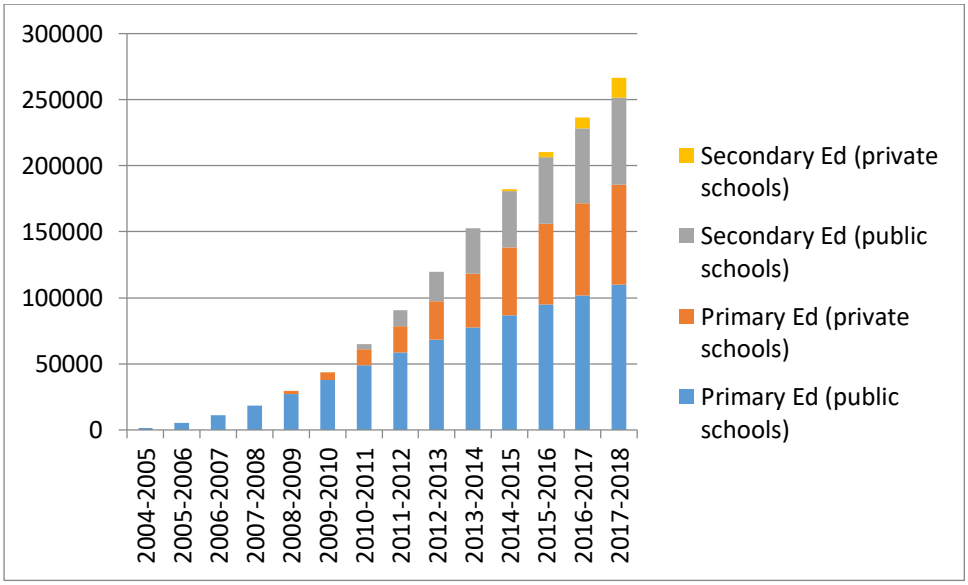
Source: Estadística de las Enseñanzas no universitarias. Subdirección General de Estadística y Estudios del Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional

Madrid also has one of the higher indicators of school segregation; it is the Spanish region with the worst education indicators and standing on the top at the European level, only surpassed by Hungary (Murillo et al., 2017; Murillo et al., 2018; Save the Children, 2019). The levels of school segregation in Spain are also significant, although important differences

among regions should be stressed, due to the local character of school segregation dynamics. In this sense, urban areas and regions with major levels of economic development are those with higher levels of school segregation and are also those with substantial levels of private education, even though public schools are also involved in segregation processes (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018).

In Madrid, the uneven distribution of students with different social backgrounds within the public sector is particularly high and could be partially explained as a result of the implementation of the English-Spanish Bilingual Program, which acted as a modulator of school choice. This program resulted in non-bilingual schools enrolling major numbers of students with a low socioeconomic status and migrant background (Gortazar & Taberner, 2020). As can be observed in Graph 9, during the first decade of the 2000s, the Bilingual Program was implemented in public primary education and had been progressively generalised to public secondary education and private subsidised schools. The program now covers around half of the primary and lower secondary schools, 'reaching the main population areas, and maintaining a proportional offer between bilingual and non-bilingual schools, in order to facilitate freedom of choice' (Consejería de Educación, 2018, p. 14).

Graph 9. Student enrolment in the Bilingual Program according to level and school provider



Source: Informe sobre la Evaluación del Programa de Enseñanza Bilingüe de la Comunidad de Madrid

The combination of broad parental school choice, a diversified network of school providers and the internal differentiation between bilingual and non-bilingual schools could have contributed to exacerbate school segregation. Indeed, according to some scholars, school segregation dynamics in Madrid may be attributed to two main factors: the expansion of the

private subsidised schools during the first decade of the 2000s and the progressive implementation of the Bilingual Program in public primary schools during the second decade (Gortazar & Taberner, 2020, p. 234).

Education Governance Reform in Madrid

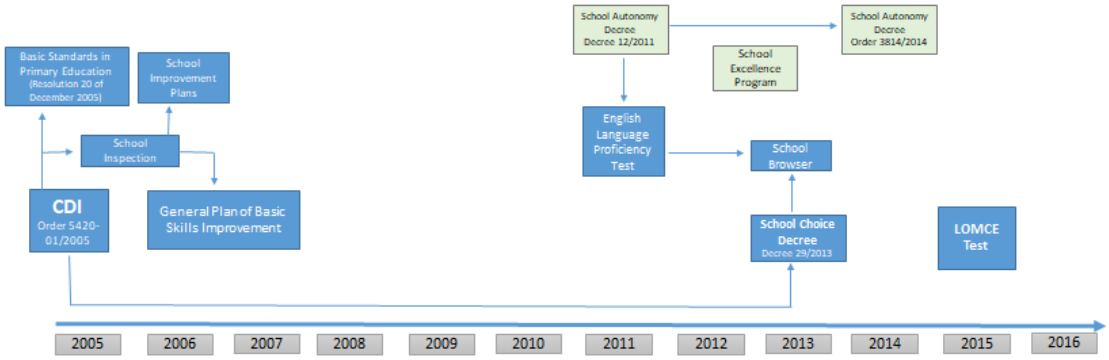
Thus, Madrid represents a very particular case to study the adoption and enactment of accountability reforms in education. The regional governments have tried to distance themselves from the administrative legacy prevailing in Spain and to initiate reforms in the field of education, which have included the adoption of accountability and school autonomy measures in an educational quasi-market environment.

During the first decade of the 2000s, Madrid initiated an education reform that introduced forms of endogenous privatisation, which was based on the broadening of parental school choice and the diversification of the school offer. Indeed, Madrid has been described, within the Spanish context, as 'one of the regions that has embraced and developed forms of endogenous and exogenous privatisation more actively during the last decade' (Olmedo, 2013, p. 64) and as 'a clear example of education privatisation expansion taking advantage of the historical PPP-in-education model' (Verger et al., 2016, p. 115).

In the context of school providers diversification due to historical factors, the regional government adopted a policy approach to expand school choice and implement programs of schools' specialisation. In parallel, external evaluation mechanisms have been implemented and used as informational devices to orient parental school choice and introduce market-oriented competitive mechanisms, which were expected to pressure schools to improve education quality (Villamor and Prieto, 2016).

From a descriptive approach, the main measures adopted in Madrid regarding the SAWA reform are summarised in the chart presented in Figure 3, which represents the cumulative governance reform process that took place in Madrid during the last decade through the use of different policy instruments. Altogether, the adoption of these policy instruments and governance devices constituted the core of the complex reform process that this thesis addresses. Nevertheless, as it will be elucidated in the results, such a process appears to be less coherent and linear, involving erratic trajectories in the accountability reform, multiple impacts and uneven enactments.

Figure 3: The accountability reform in Madrid



Source: own elaboration based on policy document analysis

However, under such post-bureaucratic approach, schools seem to face market pressures with strategies that focus on maintaining the school enrolment and reaching more school resources rather than introducing pedagogical improvements at the classroom level (Prieto and Villamor, 2012).

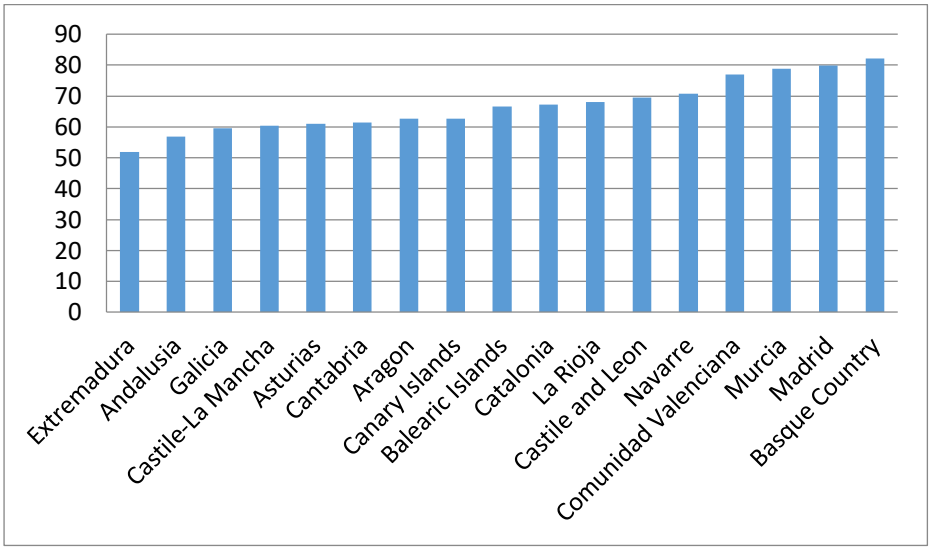
Fernandez-Gonzalez (2016) analyses the process of education reform in Madrid using the concept of 'school enclosure' as an analytical tool to study the endogenous forms of privatisation taking place in Madrid. Accordingly, the education reform in Madrid has involved different instruments with particular impacts. To this regard, the open enrolment policies and the free school choice measures generated a 'non-solidarity territorialisation' of schooling (Fernandez-Gonzalez, 2016) with great impacts in terms of educational inequalities and school segregation. Yet the external evaluation mechanisms contributed to enhance a more hierarchical government of schools. Moreover, the combination of external evaluation mechanisms with school choice, competitive dynamics and managerial forms of school autonomy resulted in a process of de-professionalisation and 'proletarisation' of teaching (Fernandez-Gonzalez, 2016).

From the point of view of the political and the ideational references, Ramirez Aísa (2016) highlights how the combinations of neoliberal and neoconservative traditions have guided the principles of the education reform in Madrid (Ramirez Aísa, 2016), although other authors suggest that the neoconservative approach dominates over the neoliberal tradition in Spanish education reform (Viñao, 2012). Interestingly, from a multi-scalar point of view, some researchers suggest that Madrid has been, at the same time, both a policy laboratory for national reforms and a policy space to implement those measures that do not succeed at the national level (Ramirez Aísa, 2016).

Contextual and School Factors Related to Accountability Reform

Interestingly, and as this thesis will further develop, accountability reform has accompanied a broader governance reform, including the adoption of a restrictive approach to school autonomy in order to specialise the school offer, as well as the promotion of broader levels of school choice. Altogether, these processes have meant to increase competitive dynamics among schools. According to PISA 2018 data, Madrid was in the top of the Spanish regions with more school competition; 80% of schools declared that they compete with two or more schools for student enrolment.

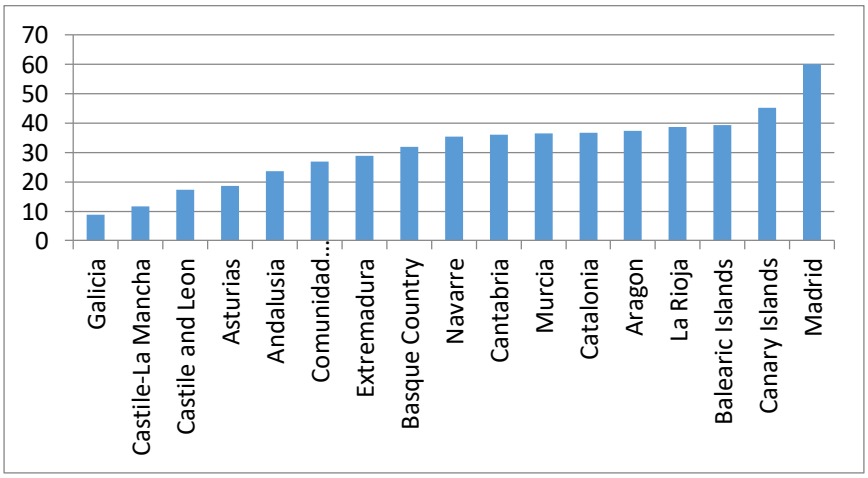
Graph 10. School competition: Two or more schools compete for our students



Source: PISA 2018 Database

These results may be attributable to multiple factors, including policy-related elements, such as the presence of a large private subsidised sector or a broader framework of school choice. However, we also should consider demographic and urbanistic factors in this regard. The regions with less school competition are located in more rural areas, with fewer students and school providers. In addition, Madrid leads in other indicators related to the accountability framework and the school competitive dynamics. For example, Madrid is in first position among other Spanish regions regarding the use of achievement data to compare schools' results. In fact, up to 60% of the schools participating in PISA 2018 declared that they regularly use school assessment data to compare their own school with other schools.

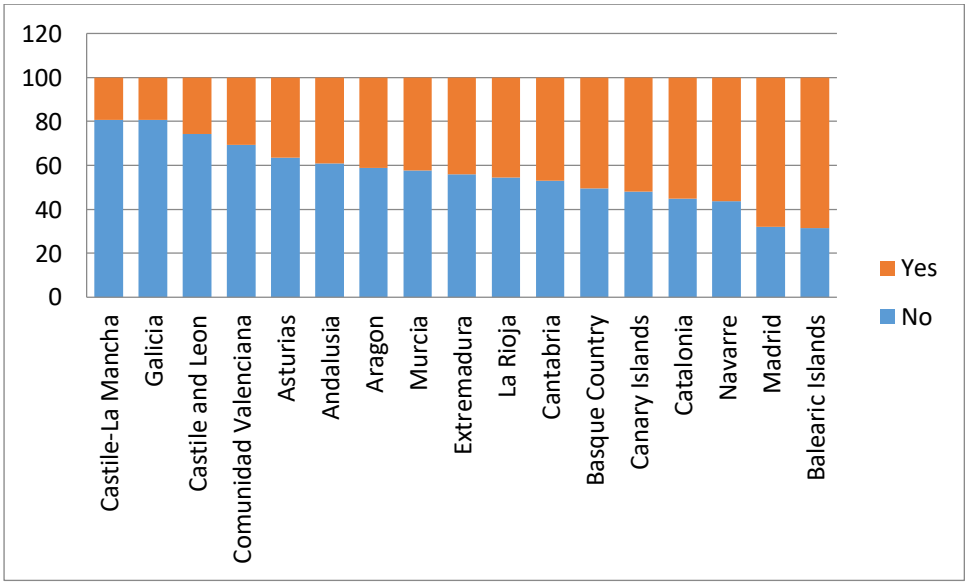
Graph 11. School's use of assessments of students to compare the school with other schools



Source: PISA Database 2018

In a similar vein, 68% of the Madrilenian schools participating in PISA 2018 declared that they use student assessments to compare their own school's performance with the district or national average.

Graph 12. Percentage of School's use of assessments of students: To compare the school to <district or national> performance

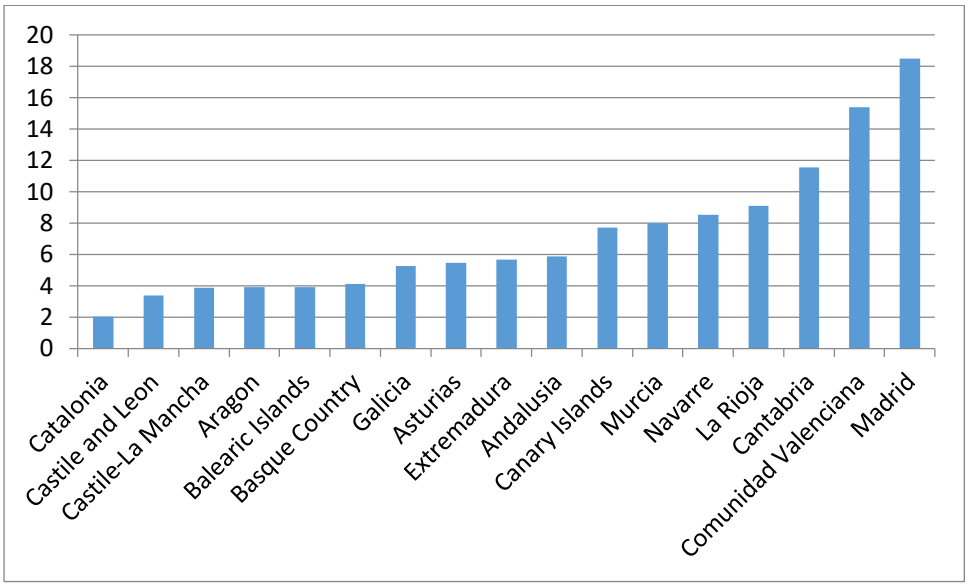


Source: PISA 2018 Database

Beyond the case of Madrid, this data suggest that Spain has great internal differences regarding how schools make use of performance indicators and assessment results. Again, this should be explained not only by local factors regarding the structure of the education system but also by policy-related factors.

As it has been already suggested, it is important to stress that Spain does not have a long-standing tradition in managerial reforms, and, hence, accountability mechanisms are mostly adopted with a quality assurance rationale (Verger et al., 2019). The test results of the accountability mechanisms in Spain are not meant to be publicly disseminated, nor are they formally attached consequential for students, teachers or principals. However, this trend is also contingent on internal differences. Madrid has tried to depart from this tradition implementing an external test to inform family choice and bounding the accountability mechanisms to school choice schemes and school autonomy logics. Although it is currently not formally allowed, 19% of the schools in Madrid still publicly post their achievement data, while in other regions like Catalonia, only 2% of schools do. All in all, the analysis of market-oriented accountability mechanisms in Madrid becomes a priority for research and will be further examined and discussed in the compilation.

Graph 13. Use of achievement data in school: Achievement data are posted publicly (e.g. in the media)



Source: PISA 2018 Database

In Brief

This chapter aimed to make clear the particularities of the policy context this thesis addresses. Briefly, the administrative tradition that dominated the public sector in Spain was mainly based on the Napoleonic administrative tradition, which implied a uniform, centralised and bureaucratic structure, despite having salient levels of de facto professional autonomy for teachers and a relatively diversification of school providers due to its historical PPP.

However, this administrative tradition was challenged with the territorial decentralisation accompanying the democratic transition. With the decentralisation of education policymaking responsibilities to the Autonomous Communities, a window of opportunity was opened for emerging education reforms at the regional level. In Madrid, this gave way to a deeper challenge to the prevailing administrative tradition, as the region developed an educational governance reform oriented towards a post-bureaucratic model. This thesis addresses the selection and adoption of novel policy instruments of post-bureaucratic nature in Madrid, its policy impacts and the emerging tensions in the local education markets as well as its enactment at the school level.

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CHAPTER 3: POLICY ADOPTION AND INSTRUMENTATION – A COMPARISON.

Verger, A., Prieto, M., Pagès, M., & Villamor, P. (2020). Common standards, different stakes: A comparative and multi-scalar analysis of accountability reforms in the Spanish education context. *European Educational Research Journal*, *19*(2), 142-164.

Common standards, different stakes: A comparative and multi-scalar analysis of accountability reforms in the Spanish education context

Abstract

An increasing number of countries are adopting accountability systems in education that rely on the external evaluation of students' learning outcomes through standardized assessments. The international dissemination of this form of accountability, often known as test-based accountability, does not imply that exactly the same policy is adopted everywhere. Accountability reforms, as any other globalizing policy model, are context-specific. The concrete form that accountability reforms adopt is contingent to a range of political, historical and institutional conditions, and to policy-making dynamics and logics that operate at multiple scales.

This paper analyses the trajectory of accountability reforms in two Spanish regions, Madrid and Catalonia, from a comparative and multi-scalar perspective. Based on document analysis of media and official sources, and exploratory interviews with key informants, the article shows that, although these two regions have pioneered the adoption of test-based accountability reforms in the Spanish context, their accountability systems have evolved quite differently. While accountability reforms in Madrid have been oriented toward the promotion of school choice and competition, Catalonia has adopted a lower-stakes accountability approach with multiple ramifications. In this paper, we explain how and why such diverging trends have been possible within the context of a common general regulatory framework.

Key words: Accountability, education reform, global education policy, multi-scalar analysis, Spain, standardized testing

Introduction

Accountability has gone global in the education policy arena. Currently, most education systems in the world are adopting more sophisticated evaluation technologies of students' learning that are increasingly used to hold schools accountable (Lingard et al 2013). As part of this global trend, school-level educational actors, including teachers and principals, are required to be more open and responsive to external judgment about their work and results. As the concept of accountability implies, if educational actors do not follow the expected behaviours and/or do not meet the expected results, they may face consequences (Bovens, 2007). The form of accountability that is spreading more intensively in education has an outcomes-based nature. This is an accountability approach that focuses on students' learning outcomes, and involves the generation of data through large-scale standardized evaluation instruments – reason why this model of accountability is also known as performative accountability (Ranson, 2003), results-driven accountability (Anderson, 2005), or test-based accountability (Hamilton et al. 2002). Some of the most common consequences of test-based accountability include the association of test results to teachers' promotion, the encouragement of school choice via the release of league tables, or the stricter supervision of underperforming schools.

The fact that test-based accountability is globalizing does not mean that accountability systems are adopting the same form everywhere, or that are enacted for exactly the same reasons, or to address the same types of educational problems. Accountability systems can differ significantly according to who is expected to provide the account, to whom is the account owed, what is to be accounted for, and what are the consequences of providing an account (Leithwood and Earl, 2000). Overall, as happens to any other global policy model, the trajectory of accountability reforms is context-specific, and the final form that accountability systems adopt is contingent to a broad range of political, historical and institutional conditions.

The main objective of this paper is to analyse the emergence and trajectory of accountability policies in the Spanish educational context during the period comprised between 2003 and 2016, with a focus on two different regions: Madrid and Catalonia. Since the Spanish education system is highly decentralized, our study focuses on the regional level. Out of the 17 Spanish regions, Madrid and Catalonia have been selected because these two regions have pioneered the adoption of accountability reforms in the Spanish educational context, but also due to the interest of analysing these two cases from a comparative perspective. Despite Madrid and Catalonia share a general education regulatory framework in education, their accountability systems have evolved quite differently, with Madrid adopting a market

accountability system that is incrementally oriented toward the promotion of school choice and competition, and Catalonia rather adopting a low-stakes accountability approach, but with multiple ramifications. Thus, the two selected cases represent a relevant example of policy divergence in a context of multi-scalar education governance.

The paper opens with the analytical framework we have applied to this study on educational reforms in a multi-scalar scenario. It follows with a brief description of the Spanish educational context, which is characterised by a historical public-private partnership in educational provision, and a progressive adoption of new public management (NPM) measures. As we develop in the following sections, both Catalonia and Madrid have developed different accountability systems within this common institutional and regulatory framework. The section on Catalonia is divided into two main stages, which correspond to two different political periods of educational change - one with a progressive coalition governing the country, and the other one with a conservative government. In Madrid, two main stages are identified as well, but they correspond to an incremental accountability reform process that has been led by the same conservative government. In both Catalonia and Madrid, we have identified dynamics of social and political resistance to the accountability reforms, to which we also refer to when developing the two cases. The paper concludes with a comparison and discussion of the main results.

A Multi-Scalar Approach to Global Education Policy

Education policies and agendas are increasingly structured globally and framed by globalising ideologies and policy paradigms such as NPM. However, the emergence of global education policies does not mean that domestic education systems are converging globally. The effects of globalization in education policy are mediated by institutional legacies, translation dynamics, and the complex interplay between global forces and domestic politics, among other contingencies (Maroy et al 2016). Research on the re-contextualization of global education policy traces the different interpretations and translations of global policy programmes, and tries to find out about the multiple relationships that reconstitute such programmes in different scales (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2011). This type of research stresses that borrowed policy ideas are modified, vernacularized or even resisted as they are enacted in different places (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2006). Consequently, global policy models tend to develop into multiform policy patterns (Ball, 2016; Schriewer, 2012).

Broadly speaking, global education policy research pays attention to the mediating role that factors and contingencies of a different nature play in the adoption and re-contextualization of global reform models. These include factors of a *political* nature such as the influence of

partisan politics, pressure groups and/or veto players in policy-making processes; *economic factors*, or how the level of economic development of countries and regions conditions what are the main problems that education policy should address, but also what policy solutions are administratively and financially viable; *institutional factors*, usually understood as the mediating role of public administration traditions and regulatory frameworks in the adoption and transformation of certain policy reforms; and *cultural factors*, which often relate to the semiotic and meaning-making dimension of education policy processes, but also to how social values or public opinion are more or less conducive to the selection and retention of certain policy solutions (Verger et al., 2016).

In the case of highly decentralized education systems, as the one we analyse in this paper, multi-scalar interactions intensify and add complexity to policy analysis, since additional scales of governance – which are mutually-embedded by definition - intervene in the adoption and enactment of educational reform processes (Robertson, 2012). Adopting a multi-scalar governance approach is not only a matter of understanding policy spaces as hierarchically organized. It implies looking at the political, economic and cultural dimensions of inter-scalar interactions, as well as to how scalar policy-making practices are produced by different political logics and social groups (Papanastasiou, 2016). Overall, a multi-scalar conception of policy processes invites us to unpack the nature of global educational reform by exploring who controls what in which scale, from the regional to the supra-national, and the inter-relationships therein (Dale, 2005).

Federal or decentralized policy regimes are usually seen as convenient settings where to undertake comparative education analyses, since these regimes allow for the control of a broad range of mediating variables, including variables of a regulatory or socio-economic nature (Carnoy, 2015). Nonetheless, as just mentioned, these regimes also introduce complexity to political analysis in the sense that the level of scalar interaction and the overlapping of meaning-making practices intensify and permeate the politics and economics of educational reform. Furthermore, in cases in which national identities are strong at the regional level – such as is the case we explore here – these identities are behind a range of additional dynamics of competition, contestation and construction of policy boundaries among multiple scales (Gallego et al., 2017).

Methodologically speaking, and as a way to track the role of all these different variables within the policy trajectory of accountability reforms in two Spanish regions, we base our analysis on Kingdon's theoretical model of policy change. According to Kingdon (1984), educational reforms, as any other type of institutional transformation, happen or, at least, are more feasible when different "streams", namely, the political, the problem and the policy

streams - all of which have their own internal logic and might evolve autonomously-, are coupled. In his model, the *problem* stream refers to the moment in which a policy or social problem gains attention; the *policy* stream refers to whether a solution to the problem in question is available and feasible; and the *political* stream refers to the political motives and opportunities for those in office to enact the solution in question (Kingdon, 1984).

The policy narratives deployed by policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders are an important entry point to explore how the mentioned streams evolve in specific educational settings and might converge in particular junctures (see Gray and Jones, 2016). Policy narratives, as well as other forms of meaning-making, can be captured in official documents, in the media or by conducting interviews with policy elites. For the specific purpose of elaborating this paper, we have resorted to document analysis of policy briefings, press releases, media kits and legal documents, published by different education stakeholders (regional educational administrations, principals, teachers' unions, parents' associations or think tanks), and to exploratory interviews with key informants in both Madrid and Catalonia.

The Spanish Education Context

Since the approval of the 1978 Constitution, the Spanish administrative structure was drastically reformed via the decentralization of the state in seventeen 'Autonomous Communities'. The emerging regional governments were provided with important levels of administrative autonomy in key areas such as education, health and welfare. Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia achieved higher levels of competences due to historic, cultural and political reasons, and they got these competences earlier than other regions. For instance, Catalonia got competences in education in the beginning of the 1980s, whereas Madrid only got them in the year 2000. The high level of administrative decentralization that prevails in Spain is far from harmonious. In fact, in Spanish education, political conflicts for competencies, and tensions around linguistic policies and curriculum control are recurrent among the different scales of governance (Engel, 2008).

The Spanish education system is organised as a public-private partnership (PPP) in which the private sector plays an important role in educational provision. In the eighties, the Catholic Church influenced decisively a reform process that ended up with the consolidation of a dual public education system in which private schools (mainly religious) could receive public funds on the condition that they follow public sector regulations. This PPP framework, in its time, allowed for an important education expansion at a low cost. However, there are also important drawbacks in its implementation, including issues of students' discrimination in enrolment processes and the collection of uncovered fees to families in PPP schools (Benito

and González, 2007). The presence of PPP schools is particularly high in regions such as Madrid, Catalonia and the Basque country.

The PPP framework has contributed to the growing politicization and dualization of education debates in Spain. Both progressive and conservative governments have generated an overproduction of norms and regulations in order to respond to different and often contradicting social demands on education (Bonal, 2000). In total, seven education reforms have taken place in Spain since the restoration of democracy in the end of the 1970s. Previous education reforms in Spain (from the seventies to the nineties) have had a more systemic character and have focused on inputs, processes and pedagogy. In contrast, the most recent reforms have a clearer focus on school governance, leadership and management. This last generation of education reforms follows a NPM rationale that challenges the horizontal style of school governance that has prevailed in Spain since the transition to democracy. The most recent educational reform, promoted through the Quality in Education Improvement Law (LOMCE for its acronym in Spanish) is a paradigmatic case of NPM in education since the main components of the law are the promotion of school autonomy, the professionalization of principals and the introduction of external standardized tests (Parcerisa, 2016). This reform was framed and justified by resorting to evidence coming from PISA and to other OECD recommendations focusing on the potential benefits of school autonomy with accountability in the governance of education (Choi and Jerrim, 2016; Parcerisa, 2016).

However, as we show in the following sections, the regional governments have a great capacity to shape some of the elements included in the Spanish legislation by enacting them selectively, and to generate their own regulations on school governance and accountability.

The Uneven Trajectory of Accountability Policies in Catalonia

At the turn of the millennium, the public debate on education was intense in Catalonia, with the *National Conference of Education* being celebrated between the years 2000 and 2002, and a *National Agreement on Education* being debated between the years 2004 and 2006. In the context of these two initiatives, significant changes in the governance of education were advocated, and policy principles such as school autonomy, co-responsibility and accountability gained centrality in the Catalan education debate. In fact, both initiatives triggered a long and disputed education reform process that would crystalize in the 2009 Catalan Education Reform Act (Farré, 2009).

The Progressive Government (2003-2010): Pioneering NPM and Modernizing Education

After 23 years of conservative governments in Catalonia since the restoration of democracy, a governmental change took place in 2003 with a broad progressive coalition (including social democrats, greens and left-nationalists) taking over. The first educational measures of this government were aligned with the main priorities stated in the *National Agreement on Education* and, especially, with the school autonomy proposal. In fact, the main governmental policy programme at that time in terms of scope and resources consisted on the promulgation of a School Autonomy Programme that aimed at advancing the pedagogic and organizational autonomy of schools. Schools taking part of this programme were expected to design a context-sensitive "school autonomy plan" to address and mitigate school failure and promote social cohesion and equity in education. If approved, schools would receive a significant grant to be used to achieve the objectives defined in their plan. In exchange, schools would need to be externally evaluated and implement self-evaluation mechanisms, as well as to receive training on strategic planning and school leadership from the Education Department (Garcia-Alegre and Del Campo-Canals, 2012). Despite its origins as a pilot-programme, half of the Catalan primary and secondary schools ended up having School Autonomy Plans (Bonal and Verger 2013).

In this same period, a central political event took place in Catalonia: the approval of the new Catalan Autonomic Statute (2006). This new Statute would have significant implications in the future development of educational reform because, among other new competences, it did allow the Catalan government to generate its own sectoral laws in core policy domains such as education. The second progressive government, which started in 2006, would take political advantage of this emerging regulatory opportunity to lead the development of the first Catalan Education Reform Act (LEC, for its acronym in Catalan) (Verger and Curran, 2016, p. 116).

The education minister with the second progressive government (2006-2010), the social-democrat Ernest Maragall, put an important emphasis on a managerial perspective to educational reform and, to a great extent, embraced the main principles of NPM. In his public and private interventions, the education minister insisted on the need to make state apparatuses slimmer and more oriented toward results, and complained about previous governments' acceptance of the "mediocrity" that prevails in public schools, being especially critical with the presence of uncommitted teachers in the system (Verger and Curran 2016). In accordance with the NPM tenets, the minister considered that, in education, *"the administration has to do four things: correct planning, regulation at the minimum, adequate provision and evaluation. That's enough."* (Maragall, 2009, p. 10). However, in his view, the

bureaucratic culture of the education system was "resistant to change, as happens to all consolidated and strong systems*"* (p. 3).

The strong emphasis on NPM principles and discourses impregnated the education reform process and, in particular, the deliberations behind the enactment of the LEC. In fact, the NPM focus, together with the lack of a clearer support to public education, changed the expected balance of supports and rejections to the LEC in the Parliament. The green party, which was part of the governmental coalition, ended up voting against the law, and the Catalan conservative party, which was in the opposition, voted in favour. The law faced also the strong opposition of the teachers' unions, which organized three sectorial strikes against the law previously to its approval.

In 2009, in the same year of the LEC approval, two different evaluations of the school census started being implemented in Catalonia, namely the Final Period Evaluation (FPE) and the Global Diagnostic Evaluation[3]. The former is an external standardized evaluation carried by the Superior Council of Evaluation, a governmental agency focusing on evaluation in education created in 1993, to 6th grade primary education students. The main goal of the FPE is to measure the basic skills of students in order to improve and orient teaching and policy (Resolució EDU/1037/2009[4]), although it has become, *de facto,* an instrument to measure schools' performance. On its part, the Global Diagnostic Evaluation is conceived as a self-evaluation process that schools have to apply yearly to 5th grade primary education students and to 3rd grade secondary education students[5] as a way to promote school improvement. Despite its internal and self-evaluation nature, both the test and the guidelines of the Global Diagnostic Evaluation are designed by the Superior Council of Evaluation, and school inspectors develop a supportive role within its implementation process.

The two large-scale evaluation initiatives described are supposed to work as a formative evaluation to improve school performance and the development of school autonomy, but without generalized consequences for those taking the test (i.e. the students) and their teachers. In fact, these evaluations were justified under the frame of the Spanish Education Law (LOE), in force between the years 2006 and 2013, as it defines *"the need to establish evaluation mechanisms capable to combine the education system goals and the needed pedagogic and management autonomy of schools" (Resolution EDU/1037/2009).* The

[3] Other school evaluations were implemented before, but neither systematically nor with a census range.

[4] Available at: http://csda.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/consell_superior_d_avalua/pdf_i_altres/prova_avaluacio_primaria_2009/avaluacio_primaria.pdf

[5] Since 2013 the Global Diagnostic Evaluation has been eliminated in the secondary education.

schools' identity cannot be identified in the public reports produced on the basis of these evaluations[6].

In 2010, the core principles of the LEC were developed through three main decrees: the "School Autonomy Decree", the "School Principals Decree" and the "Evaluation Decree". The "School Autonomy Decree" defined school autonomy as a multidimensional concept that covers aspects of both pedagogy and the management of schools - although it was more concrete in how to develop managerial than pedagogic tasks at the school level. The "Principals' Decree" defined the new roles of school leaders through the professionalization of its functions and an increasing range of attributions in new areas of decision-making such as teachers' selection and evaluation. Finally, the "Evaluation Decree" defined the creation of an independent evaluation agency that would be able to evaluate a broad range of dimensions of the educational system, many of which had not been systematically evaluated until then, including teachers' performance (Bonal and Verger, 2013; Collet 2017).

The Conservatives Are Back (2010-ongoing): 'Back to Basics' for Education Success

In November 2010, the Catalan conservative party won the elections and a new government was constituted. One of the first decisions of the new government was to cancel the creation of the independent Education Evaluation Agency. The government argued that, in the context of the financial crisis, it was not feasible to create a new public agency, although it is also known that the conservative government was reluctant to create an independent evaluation body out of the Education Department's direct control (Verger and Curran, 2016; Farré, 2011).

The first phase of this new conservative period was characterized by the application of important budget cuts in all types of public services. In education, these cuts meant, among other things, an increase of the teachers' working load, a reduction of teachers' salaries, and the elimination of some emblematic educational programmes, including the School Autonomy Plans. The budget cuts limited, but did not impede the Catalan government advancing its own education policy agenda. With the conservative government, the LEC was developed in a very selective way (Bonal and Verger, 2013). Specifically, the conservative Education Minister, Irene Rigau (December 2010 - January 2016), focused on three particular areas of educational reform. First, the government focused on strengthening the figure of schools' principals by giving them more power in the selection of the teaching staff (Decree

[6] The results of both tests are released every year, and target different audiences. Families receive the individual results of their children compared to the results of the Catalan average. Schools receive their results compared with the average results of other schools with a similar student's composition. Finally, an overview of the results at the system level is published in a report that targets policy makers and practitioners.

39/2014)[7] and by establishing qualification procedures for those teachers aiming to become school principals.

Secondly, the government promoted common core curricular standards in core knowledge areas such as Mathematics and Language via a so-called 'basic skills' programme. This programme, together with the elimination of the School Autonomy programme and the intensification of external evaluation instruments (as we describe below), somehow contributed to narrow the curriculum and to reduce the pedagogic autonomy of teachers and schools (Verger and Curran, 2016).

Thirdly, with the suspension of an independent evaluation agency, the Inspection Services and the Superior Council of Evaluation saw their education evaluation competences amplified. For instance, the Superior Council of Evaluation's Final Period Evaluation (FPE) was expanded in 2011 to the secondary education level (ENS/2780/2011)[8]. At the same time, the government reformed the FPE test to align it with PISA contents, approach and standards. As the government admitted in its 2012 National Plan for School Success:

> "The levels fixed for each objective [in the plan] are established from the correspondences between the levels of the FPE test (2012) in primary and secondary education, and the levels of the new tests which since 2013 will be adapted to the methodology and PISA exigencies as well as to the new curricular model."[9]

This apparently technical change in the national assessment system was seen as a mechanism for the Catalan Government to improve the performance of Catalan schools in PISA. In fact, when the PISA 2015 report was released, the Education Department attributed the results' improvement in this international test to the fact that it had aligned its national assessment system to PISA-metrics and -procedures.[10] In the meantime, the Inspection Services have acquired new areas of competence and adopted two new school evaluation programmes, namely the Pedagogic Audits and the Annual Schools' Evaluation:

> a) The Pedagogic Audits aim at improving underperforming primary schools (i.e. schools with more than 30% of students underperforming in the FPE test) through an *"integral and exhaustive analysis of each school"* with *"specific intervention purposes for key aspects of betterment"* (Education Department, Annual Report 2015, pg. 6). The Pedagogic Audits represent the first accountability mechanism with concrete consequences for schools in the Catalan education system, in the sense that

[7] Available at: http://portaldogc.gencat.cat/utilsEADOP/PDF/6591/1346314.pdf
[8] http://csda.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/consell_superior_d_avalua/pdf_i_altres/prova_avaluacio_eso_2012/11319055.pdf
[9] Departament d'Ensenyament, 2013. Ofensiva de país a favor de l'èxit escolar, p. 22.
[10] http://www.ara.cat/en/Catalonia-Spain-EU-OECD-PISA_0_1701429920.html

underperforming schools become externally intervened. Since 2014, about one-hundred primary schools have been audited, and the Education Department is considering expanding this initiative to secondary education.

b) The inspectors have developed the so-called Annual Schools' Evaluation (AVAC for its acronym in Catalan), as a way of responding to the governmental request of classifying schools according to their level of effectiveness[11]. The AVAC defines schools' effectiveness according to students' learning outcomes- in both external (i.e. FPE) and self-evaluations-, and measures the progress of school against social indicators[12]. The AVAC has been also used to promote teachers being paid according to their level of productivity. Teachers who are in highly effective schools according to AVAC can apply for a voluntary individual evaluation in order to obtain salary bonuses (Order ENS/330/2014). In this evaluation, teachers need to demonstrate their specific contribution to the success of the school, and the school principal validates such an assessment. Nonetheless, not many teachers have applied to this evaluation so far because of the existence of easier alternatives to promote within the salary scale.

Overall, the widening of school inspectors' competences and instruments reflects the preference of the conservative government for the recentralization of school control and more hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of accountability.

Responses to Accountability

The development of the accountability system in Catalonia is aligned with measures that are included in the controversial Spanish LOMCE education reform act, which promotes standardized assessments in both primary and secondary education. The LOMCE evaluations, despite are grounded on similar evaluations to those being implemented by the regional administration, have generated a high level of criticism within the educational community in Catalonia for two main reasons. First, because at some point the LOMCE threatened with the evaluations having certification effects for students and, second, because these evaluations were advanced in the context of a very explicit neoliberal discourse on educational reform. An important oppositional campaign to the standardized evaluations coming from teachers, but especially families, has been organised, and since 2014 more than one thousand and five hundred families have boycotted the tests[13]. According to the organizers of this campaign, the Education Department has asked the inspection to closely supervise the role of principals in

[11] Avaluació Anual de Centres (AVAC) *Subdirecció General de la Inspecció d'Educació*, 2015. http://srvcnpbs.xtec.cat/inslle/docs/20151014_AVAC_Presentacio_Centres_SGIE_2015.pdf
[12] See: http://educacio.gencat.cat/documents/IPCNormativa/DOIGC/PEC_Avaluacio_centre.pdf
[13] http://noalalomce.net/1595-families-desobeeixen-lomce-departament/

the schools that take part in the boycott, and has suggested them to repeat the test in order to prevent disciplinary sanctions.[14] The Education Department denies these threats, and argues that the boycott was based on "misinterpretations" and a climate of "political contamination".[15]

More recently, the Catalan education system has been shaken by a big public debate on pedagogic innovation. This debate has been promoted and articulated by a campaign called *Escola Nova 21* that is backed by a group of philanthropic foundations and policy entrepreneurs, and has received the economic and administrative support from both private and public sources. This campaign advocates for Catalan schools adopting innovative pedagogies and transmitting a broader range of skills – including soft-skills – as a way to help students to adapt themselves to the economic and social demands of the 21st century. The campaign has had a huge media and political impact since its release in 2016, and more than four hundred public and private schools from the whole Catalan territory have joined it, with the expectation of borrowing and learning from more innovative pedagogies and more flexible forms of school organization. This pro-innovation movement has been received with enthusiasm by key education stakeholders and experts, although there are also those that warn that this initiative could promote further school segmentation (since its mainly middle classes who are demanding innovative schools) (Síndic de Greuges, 2016). Nonetheless, for the purpose of this paper, what is more relevant from this campaign is that it challenges *de facto* the desirability of applying and expanding the influence of external and standardized forms of evaluation. As the Escola Nova 21 campaign makes clear, to become advanced and innovative, schools need to be more pedagogically autonomous from public administration prerogatives, and adopt forms of comprehensive and personalized evaluation that are not based on standardization [16].

[14] https://xarxaescolesinsubmises.wordpress.com/2015/05/18/nota-de-premsa-la-consellera-rigau-amenaca-que-expedientara-les-direccions-dels-centres-on-les-families-han-fet-boicot-a-les-proves-wert/

[15] http://www.ara.cat/societat/Rigau-proves-Primaria-contaminacio-politica_0_1353464903.html

[16] http://www.escolanova21.cat/marc-escola-avancada/#1461157512954-e6ec49a5-dbab

Table 1. Political periods and contemporary educational reform in Catalonia

Period	President	Political Orientation	Education Department	General Education Policies and Reforms	Accountability Policies
2003 - 2006	Pasqual Maragall	Progressive	Josep Bargalló / Marta Cid	National Agreement on Education School Autonomy Projects	Continuity (sample based evaluation) and specific program's evaluation
2006 - 2010	José Montilla	Progressive	Ernest Maragall	LEC ERA	2009: Final Period Evaluation (in primary education) 2009: Diagnostic Evaluation 2010: Evaluation Decree
2010 - 2012	Artur Mas	Conservative	Irene Rigau	Budget cuts in the education sector Teaching Personnel Decree	2010: Cancellation of the Evaluation Decree 2012: Final Period Evaluation (in secondary education)
2012 - 2016	Artur Mas	Conservative	Irene Rigau	Budget cuts in education Basic Skills Program	2013: Pedagogic Audits 2014: AVAC

*Source: Authors.

To sum up, Table 1 gathers the different accountability initiatives that have been enacted in Catalonia in the last years by different governments, whereas Table 2 unpacks and classifies these accountability initiatives according to their main orientation. This second table shows how a mix of bureaucratic and managerial forms of evaluation currently coexist in Catalonia. Most of these evaluations rely on the external assessment of students' results although, with the exception of a few recent developments, there are not clear or at least large-scale consequences for those agents giving the account. Overall, a low-stakes model of accountability prevails in the country.

Both tables reflect that, in the last decade, there has been a sort of governmental activism concerning the design and implementation of numerous forms of evaluation and accountability initiatives in Catalan education. Nonetheless, despite the increasing presence of different forms of accountability in school's daily life, it is not clear yet whether the adoption

of all these accountability measures responds to a coherent and well-coordinated education reform programme.

Table 2. Accountability Model and Configurations in Catalonia

Policy	Type of Accountability	Actor/ Agent	Forum/ Principal	Aspect of Conduct	Mechanism	Consequences
Final Period Evaluation (FPE) as a diagnosis and monitoring tool	Managerial/bureaucratic	Schools, teachers and principals	Administration (SCE and Inspectorate's Body)	Student's results (school level) Teachers' practices	Performance evaluation Observation and interviews by the inspectors	No substantive consequences Pedagogic Audits (see below)
Global Diagnostic Evaluation (GDE)	Managerial / professional	Schools	Administration, Schools	Student's results (school level)	Performance evaluation (includes FPE but not only)	No consequences
Pedagogic Audits	Bureaucratic / professional	Schools	Administration (Inspectorate's Body)	Student's results, learning process	Audit	Underperforming schools intervened
AVAC	Bureaucratic / managerial	Schools, Teachers	Administration (Inspectorate's Body), principals.	Student's results, school goals and context	Performance evaluation, context indicators, school objectives' achievement	Schools classification Teachers' career development

*Source: Authors. Structure of the table adapted from Verger and Parcerisa (2017).

Madrid: Accountability as a Key Component of Market-oriented Reforms

During the last twenty years, the region of Madrid has been governed by the Popular Party (PP). Ideologically speaking, this political party embraces conservative and liberal values at the same time (Puelles Benítez, 2004). Its educational model fits within what Apple calls *conservative modernization* (2006), an education reform agenda comprised by "competition, markets and choice, on the one hand, and accountability, performance objectives, standards, national and state testing, and national and state-wide curriculum, on the other" (p. 55). The accountability reform process advanced by the PP in Madrid starts in 2003, year in which Esperanza Aguirre, regional leader of the party, became the president of the region, position that she would occupy until 2012.

First Reform Period (2003-2007): Transparency and Common Core Standards

The education reform carried out in Madrid is highly indebted to President Aguirre's personal preferences on education policy. She declares herself an admirer of political figures such as Margaret Thatcher, as well as a faithful advocate of "freedom"[17]. In her 2003 investiture debate, President Aguirre announced the introduction of a standardized test in education[18], which would have two main qualities: first, it would allow students, teachers, parents and the educational administration to find out whether students' knowledge match the aims of primary education and, second, it would infuse the Madrilenian educational system with further transparency, understood as the publication of schools' results. In that same investiture debate, Aguirre added that school choice would be a main educational goal in her term. With these declarations, she was opening a decade of intense educational reforms in which external assessments, accountability and transparency of schools' results would play an essential role.

The education model of the government of Madrid was constructed and publicly portrayed as an alternative to the educational policies promoted by the social-democratic Spanish Socialist Party at the national level. Sources of the regional Education Department considered the social-democratic educational model as undermining educational excellence, meritocracy and competitiveness[19] due to its "*comprehensive and obscurantist*" character,[20]its "*sectarianism and demagogy*"[21], and its "*egalitarian fundamentalism*"[22]. In fact, the educational policies developed

[17] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdcMLk6MnEk
[18] Madrid Assembly Diary of Sessions nº 2, VII term, 19 and 20 november 2003, p. 38.
[19] See Esperanza Aguirre's declarations in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm90I11XgTU
[20] Luis Peral in the Madrid Assembly Diary of Sessions, nº 492, VII term, 22 June 2005, p. 14169.
[21] See: http://www.fundacionfaes.org/file_upload/publication/pdf/20130520175545en-nombre-de-la-equidad-no-se-puede-extender-la-ignorancia.pdf

by the PP in Madrid explicitly aimed to "*eradicate from the Madrilenian educational system the principles introduced by the socialist laws*"[23]. The government of President Aguirre was very close to the postulates of the Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis (FAES for its acronym in Spanish), a neoliberal think tank chaired by José María Aznar, Spanish President between 1996 and 2004, that is known for advocating market mechanisms as the best way to improve educational quality (Olmedo and Santa Cruz, 2013).

In 2005, the Education Department of Madrid announced the introduction of a standardized and census-based test named *Basic Knowledges and Skills* (CDI for its acronym in Spanish) to 6th grade primary education students. The test would be run by the Regional Directorate of Academic Planning, and implemented by the Inspection Service. The adoption of the CDI test was justified by the mediocre scores of Spanish students in PISA[24], and by the poor results reported by the Inspection Service of Madrid in the 2003-2004 academic year (Order 5420-01/2005).

The first CDI test reported very poor results, with about 30% of the students not achieving minimum standards in Maths and Language. As a way to address these bad results, a *Basic Skills Improvement General Plan* was adopted. This plan included, among other measures, setting learning standards in Spanish and Mathematics as those measured by the CDI test[25], the dissemination of teaching materials that fit these standards, and the implementation of teachers' training initiatives to promote a *basic skills* teaching focus (Consejo Escolar de Madrid, 2009). Overall, these different initiatives reflect the results-driven character of the accountability policies being implemented in Madrid at that time.

The CDI test has been implemented on yearly basis since 2005. It is compulsory for every school, regardless of whether it is public or private, it has not academic consequences for students, and does not include cut-off points (neither for students nor for schools). In 2005, the schools scores were made public through a ranking, but the belligerent reaction of the educational community obliged the Education Department to do not rank the school results again, although these results continued being published in a different format.[26]

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[22] Lucía Fígar's declarations in: http://www.madridiario.es/noticia/200964/madrid/criticas-y-apoyos-a-la-excelencia-de-aguirre.html

[23] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2y9RinNb40

[24] In 2000, 20% of Spanish students performed at level 1 or below in literacy; in 2003, 23% of them performed at level 1 or below in mathematics. (OECD, 2003 and 2004).

[25] See: http://www.madrid.org/wleg_pub/secure/normativas/contenidoNormativa.jsf;jsessionid=525FAC6EC84AC0558990DF26F47A5306.p0323335?cdestado=P&nmnorma=3406&opcion=VerHtml#no-back-button

[26] El Mundo Press news (2006) available at: http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2006/06/15/madrid/1150367451.html

Second Period (2007-ongoing): School Choice, Autonomy and Competition

In 2007, Esperanza Aguirre was re-elected as the president of Madrid, and Lucía Figar became the Education Minister of the region (see Table 3). During the investiture debate, president Aguirre insisted on the idea that her government would advocate for transparency in education, as well as for making education stakeholders more responsive to their results.[27] She also announced that her government would promote two major pro-school choice measures: first, the elimination of the school catchment areas (so parents could choose any Madrilenian school independently of its location) and, second, a programme on school autonomy as a way of favouring school diversification and give more choice options to families.[28]

The announced reforms would mainly materialize in Aguirre's third period in office, which started in 2011. In this period, the *freedom of choice* principle became even more central in the educational policies and official discourse of the regional government. The Minister of Education of Madrid, Lucía Figar, in different public interventions, endorsed strongly the freedom of school choice idea by following the conventional public choice rationale (i.e. families' choice will trigger competition dynamics between schools, and such competition will generate better quality education at both the school and the system levels):

> *"Families are trapped in their neighbourhoods, and we don't know if eventually they choose certain schools coerced, because they have no other choice. This will force low demanded schools to move up. All this improves freedom of choice, equality of opportunities and it also improves quality, because it introduces higher competition among schools and this usually rises the level."*[29]

With Lucía Figar as regional Minister of Education, the two main pro-school choice legislative changes announced by President Aguirre were enacted, namely the Decree on Freedom of School Choice (Decree 29/2013),[30] and the School Autonomy Decree (Decree 12/2011).[31] The Freedom of School Choice decree main measure consisted on the removal of the school admission areas, turning the whole region of Madrid into a unique admission area. Another important choice-related measure included in the decree was the creation of a "school browser" with general and accessible information about all Madrilenian schools, including the school CDI scores (Villamor y Prieto, 2016).[32] As a way to promote school choice, the regional Education Department continued making schools' scores public, but with the schools being listed

[27] Madrid Assembly Diary of Sessions nº2, VIII term, 18 June 2007, p. 36.
[28] Madrid Assembly Diary of Sessions nº2, IX term, 14 and 15 June 2011, p. 60.
[29] See: http://www.telemadrid.es/?q=programas/elcirculo-primera-hora/lucia-figar-en-el-circulo-1
[30] Available at: https://www.bocm.es/boletin/CM_Orden_BOCM/2013/04/12/BOCM-20130412-1.PDF
[31] Available at: https://www.bocm.es/boletin/CM_Orden_BOCM/2011/04/15/BOCM-20110415-3.PDF
[32] The browser can be found here: http://www.madrid.org/wpad_pub/run/j/MostrarConsultaGeneral.icm

alphabetically and grouped by municipalities (unlike in 2005, when the schools were ranked hierarchically by scores). Nonetheless, the school scores were shown in their absolute value and not corrected by the socio-economic status of students.

The School Autonomy Decree allows schools to modify the schedule, the curriculum, the methodologies and/or the language of instruction according to their own school educational project. This Decree was modified and extended in 2014 (Order 3814/2014)[33] after the approval of Spanish reform act LOMCE in 2013 - since LOMCE promotes school autonomy by, among other measures, allowing regional governments and schools to add specific subjects to the ones comprised in the national curriculum, and to decide in which year primary education learning standards should be reached.

However, the type of school autonomy promoted by the Madrilenian educational authorities is, in practice, *limited* and *controlled* (cf. Eurydice, 2007). The school autonomy projects require from the educational authorities' approval, and they must respond to the fundamental knowledge and skills stated in the curriculum defined by the Education Department. School autonomy, in curricular terms, is restricted because schools are expected to adopt the curricular specialization programs offered by the educational authorities, i.e. Spanish-English bilingual education and ICT education. Most schools have embraced one of these two programmes, with the bilingual program being the most widespread, due to the extra governmental funding that come with them. The school information browser shows the English language results of the bilingual schools,[34] as well as which schools have joined any of the curricular specialization programs designed by the Department of Education. For many schools, embracing these specialization programs becomes a sort of marketing strategy because strengthens their visibility in the browser and because many families see these programs as an education quality hallmark (Prieto and Villamor, 2012).

In Madrid, the official approach to 'school autonomy' is articulated in a way that portrays schools as the main responsible of education quality. The principals of low performing schools must identify the causes of underperformance and, accordingly, reinforce organizational issues and/or pedagogic processes through a *school improvement plan* monitored by the Inspection Service (Dirección General de Innovación, Becas y Ayudas a la Educación, 2016). The schools externally intervened are usually those schools attending the most vulnerable population (Anghel and Cabrales, 2010; Trillo, Pérez and Crespo, 2006). However, with this type of

33 http://www.madrid.org/wleg_pub/secure/normativas/contenidoNormativa.jsf?opcion=VerHtml&nmnorma=8798&cdestado=P#no-back-button

34 See: http://www.bocm.es/boletin/CM_Orden_BOCM/2011/01/21/BOCM-20110121-15.PDF

interventions, low performance is usually associated with school-level aspects, and the economic, cultural and social determinants of school performance tend to be neglected.

In a way, the intensity of the standardized testing dynamic in Madrid has altered the role of traditional education stakeholders. Among other things, it has contributed to narrow down the conventional school support functions of the inspectors. The inspectors now focus on implementing the standardized test, and on supervising the performance improvement plans of low performing schools[35]. The role of the school principals has also changed drastically within this emerging accountability regime. The government of Madrid conceives school principals as agents of the educational administration whose work and functions need to be professionalized. The Principals' Selection Decree, which was also approved by the Aguirre administration,[36] states the need to give professional status to school managers through recognizing their responsibility and commitment via economic incentives. The model of principals' selection is highly intervened by the government, and has allowed the Madrilenian educational authorities to choose, on many occasions, their preferred candidates at the expense of the ones proposed by the schools (Bolívar, 2013).

Finally, is worth mentioning that the better scores achieved by the Madrilenian students in the last editions of PISA and TIMSS have been portrayed by the educational authorities as clear evidence of the increasing quality and excellence of the Madrilenian education system, and of the effectiveness of the educational reforms developed.[37] The Education Department also highlights that the schools that have endorsed the Bilingual Education Program obtain better results in international assessments than non-bilingual schools.[38]

Responses to Accountability in Madrid

The first application of the CDI test was quite controversial. The Madrilenian Association of Educational Guidance and Psycho-pedagogy[39] published in 2005 a press release supporting diagnostic assessments, but criticizing the CDI test. The Association defended that diagnoses, to

[35] See for instance: https://www.bocm.es/boletin/CM_Orden_BOCM/2016/08/12/BOCM-20160812-9.PDF

[36] Available at: http://www.madrid.org/dat_oeste/inspeccion/equipos_directivos/decreto_63_2004.pdf

[37] See for instance: http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadervalue1=filename%3D101203+CONCLUSIONES+INFORME+PISA+2009.pdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1271819634741&ssbinary=true; https://ppmadrid.es/esperanza-aguirre-resultado-informe-pisa-erradicando-principios-de-leyes-socialistas/

[38] See: http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadervalue1=filename%3D161220+NP+CG+Informe+Evaluacion+Bilinguismo+2016.pdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1352920613539&ssbinary=true

[39] This Association represents school counsellors, the professionals in charge of enforcing the tests at schools.

be meaningful, should be combined with training and guidance measures. In its opinion, assessments should not only focus on basic skills, and include measures to support low performing students as well as information related to students' development and students' and schools' sociocultural backgrounds.

These criticisms have been echoed by teachers' unions and parents' associations. Teachers unions have denounced the lack of scientific rigour of the CDI test and the lack of reliability of the results (pointing out to the variability that school scores show yearly) [40], as well as the political character of the test, arguing that its purpose was simply to promote a market logic in education[41]. They have called for a boycott against the test several times, and in 2015 called for a sectoral strike on the testing day.[42]

The progressive Federation of Associations of Students' Parents appealed in 2008 against the publication of schools' scores in the Madrilenian Court of Justice, although the appeal did not progress. This has not discouraged the parents' federation from continue criticizing the test, and defending students' and parents' right to opt-out of standardized testing. The federation has spread a justification template for those parents who refuse their children taking the test[43]. It has also denounced that both teachers and educational authorities put pressure on parents and students to take the exam by threating them about consequences in final grades,[44] or that inspectors go to schools to administer the test without previous notice to prevent students' absence[45].

[40] See: http://elpais.com/diario/2008/12/16/madrid/1229430259_850215.html

[41] Available at: http://www.feccoo-madrid.org/comunes/recursos/15708/doc222503_Posicion_CCOO_frente_a_las_pruebas_externas_.pdf

[42] See: http://www.europapress.es/madrid/noticia-ccoo-madrid-anuncia-huelga-educacion-24-marzo-llama-boicotear-pruebas-cdi-20150226143151.html

[43] The template can be found at: http://www.fapaginerdelosrios.org/actualidad/detalles/462/5/

[44] Available at: http://www.fapaginerdelosrios.org/actualidad/detalles/462/9/#detalles

[45] See for instance: http://www.fapaginerdelosrios.org/actualidad/detalles/474/8/#detalles

Table 3. Political periods and contemporary educational reform in Madrid

Period	President	Education Department	Accountability policies
November 2003-June 2007	Esperanza Aguirre	Luis Peral	2004: Decree of principals' selection 2005: fundamental knowledge and skills standards for Spanish Language and Mathematics. 2005-2007: "General Improvement Plan of Basic Skills" 2007: School Inspection Organization
June 2007- June 2015	Esperanza Aguirre Ignacio González	Lucía Figar	2010: English language proficiency test 2011: School Autonomy Decree 2013: Decree of free school choice 2014: New School Autonomy Decree

*Source: Authors

In the end of 2013, after ten years of active education reforms, the government of the Community of Madrid had already advanced the main elements of an ambitious educational reform programme consisting on the promotion of the external evaluation of schools' performance, school autonomy and freedom of school choice. Table 3 summarizes the different accountability measures that have been developed in Madrid since 2003 to support this education reform agenda, and table 4 classifies and unpacks these measures by specifying their main characteristics.

The education policies adopted in Madrid apparently promote school autonomy and a more tamed education authorities' intervention. However, behind a pro-freedom and liberal jargon, the Madrilenian educational reform hides a *re-regulation process* (cf Ball, 2003) characterized by the promotion of managerial and market forms of accountability in which public authorities play a very active and patronising role.

Table 4. Accountability Model and Configurations in Madrid

Policy	Type of Accountability	Actor/Agent	Forum/ Principal	Aspect of Conduct	Mechanism	Consequences
***Basic Knowledges and Skills* test - browser**	Managerial	Schools Principals Teachers	Administration Parents	Students results Schools performance	Standardized test Public information about schools' results	Publication of results, and families' choice
English language proficiency test	Managerial	Schools Principals Teachers	Administration Parents	Students results School performance	Standardized test Public information about schools' results	Publication of results, and families' choice
Other pro-school choice measures	Market	Administration Schools	Parents	School quality Educational projects Responsiveness to families' demands	Creation of a single area of school choice Promotion of school autonomy plans	School choice, diversification and competition

*Source: Authors. Format adapted from Verger and Parcerisa (2016).

Discussion and Conclusions

Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (Kingdon, 1984) provides with useful analytical categories to compare diverging reform trajectories, as those presented in this article. According to Kingdon, the key element to understand why a new policy is adopted "*is not where the policy idea comes from, but what made this idea take hold and grow*" (p. 76). In his theoretical model, the *problem*, the *policy* and the *political* streams are independent elements of the policy process that need to be coupled to provoke effective policy changes. In the two contexts analysed, Madrid and Catalonia, the accountability reforms are the result of different problem-policy-political stream configurations, but also of a different level of coupling between these three elements.

In Madrid, a high level of political continuity of a government that is ideologically committed to market logics in education has contributed to adopt a higher-stakes accountability reform through an incremental policy process. In contrast, in Catalonia, the accountability reforms

started with a multi-party left-leaning government. This government introduced new forms of external and internal education evaluation as a way to promote more autonomous and results-based oriented schools; however, the subsequent conservative government interrupted the plans of creating an independent education evaluation agency, and meant the strengthening of the evaluation profile of the inspection services instead.

Overall, this paper shows that different political ideologies (namely, social-democrats, conservatives and neoliberals) seem to converge in the desirability of embracing accountability measures, and see external evaluations as a core instrument to address the underperformance of the education system. In a way, education 'excellence' and school 'success' are a common concern in the two analysed regions. Not surprisingly, mediocre results in PISA in the past have opened a political opportunity window to enact external evaluations of students' and schools' performance. At the same time, when the PISA results have improved, even if they have done so modestly, the regional governments of both Madrid and Catalonia have argued that these improvements are the consequence of their education reforms, including the promotion of school autonomy and the intensification of test-based accountability measures.

However, despite different political forces see accountability as a desirable policy approach, they provide accountability with different policy meanings and as a way to advance different education governance models. For instance, the neoliberal government in Madrid sees accountability as a tool to control the transmission of common core standards but, more importantly, to promote school competition and school choice. The social-democratic Catalan government saw accountability as a way to modernize the education system through the promotion of autonomy and an audit culture at the school level (cf. Power, 1997), whereas the conservative government that followed has used accountability measures as a way to control the delivery of common core standards and put more pressure on underperforming schools. The accountability model in Catalonia is predominantly low-stakes and the different Catalan governments - independently of their ideology - have been very reluctant to make the schools' results public so far. Nonetheless, the last conservative government has begun to feel the use of evaluation in a higher stakes way: to pay teachers according to productivity, or to intervene in underperforming schools.

From a multi-scalar education reform perspective, the results of our research are slightly counter-intuitive. We could expect that Catalonia, a region with a strong national identity, would reform education as a way to counter-balance and build scale boundaries with the Spanish regulatory framework. However, the educational reform in Catalonia was initiated in a period of social democratic-led governments in both Catalonia and Spain, and both governments had a similar approach to education and school governance. At that time, the school autonomy

with accountability reforms carried out in Catalonia were seen as complementing Spanish education general regulations and, in fact, as a way to interconnect both regulatory scales[46]. In contrast, the government of Madrid wanted to promote, via market-oriented accountability policies, school choice and school competition as a way to break with the legacy of the comprehensive and pro-equity education model that the social-democratic party had been promoting when governing the country in the 1980s and in the 1990s.

Together with scale, time is also an important element to understand variegated education reform trajectories. In Madrid, the educational competences were transferred in the year 2000, in a moment of a prominent neo-liberal global hegemony that reinforced the ideological commitment of the regional government with the market education model. In contrast, in Catalonia, the education competences were transferred in the beginning of the eighties, in a period when Spain was trying to, still far from NPM prerogatives, build a new welfare state. Thus, the school autonomy with accountability reform in Catalonia had to be constructed once a bureaucratic culture of educational governance and evaluation had already sedimented. Thus, together with issues of political discontinuity, path dependent dynamics and the influence of previous policy legacies are behind the uneven nature of the accountability reform trajectory in Catalonia.

In the following table, on the basis of Kingdon's categories, we summarize what are the main dimensions and elements that conform the accountability reform processes and their specific re-contextualisation in the two analysed regions.

[46] The educational conflict between the Catalan and the Spanish government would come later on, with the deliberation and approval of the LOMCE. But this conflict did focus on language of instruction issues and the structure of the curriculum, but not on the models of school governance and education evaluation proposed by the Spanish law. See: http://www.elmundo.es/sociedad/2016/06/29/5772db9be2704e0f0e8b45ac.html

Table 5. Multiple streams of accountability reforms

Region	Problem	Policy	Political
Madrid	- Low educational performance - Lack of school competition	- Incremental reform - High stakes accountability through external evaluations and public information of school results	- Political continuity of a government ideologically committed to high-stakes accountability and school choice - Regional government reasserts meritocracy and market principles in front of the Spanish social-democratic legacy - Mediocre PISA results as a window of political opportunity - Madrid assumes competences on education policy in an era of neoliberal hegemony
Catalonia	- Low educational performance - Lack of an evaluation culture. Excessively bureaucratic and centralized education system	- Uneven reform process - Low stakes accountability attached to the promotion of school autonomy (period I) - Low stakes accountability as a way to exercise control over the curriculum (period II)	- New autonomy statute allows the enactment of an autonomic ERA act - Mediocre PISA results (together with other negative socio-education indicators) as a window of political opportunity - Both governments (in period I and II) embrace the accountability norm, but translate it very differently

*Source: Authors.

The two case studies presented in this paper also allow us to reflect on the complex inter-play between school autonomy and accountability dynamics. Accountability and school autonomy reforms tend to advance simultaneously, since, governments are inclined to strengthen the autonomy status of schools if schools become more open to be regularly evaluated and monitored (see OECD 2013). This combination of school autonomy with accountability has materialized in the recent educational reforms that Madrid and Catalonia have gone through, but in an uneasy way. Both the concept and the original meaning of school autonomy has been significantly altered and transformed in the two regions. In Catalonia, school autonomy started having a more pedagogic connotation in the early stages of the educational reform, but ended up focusing on the managerial dimension of autonomy and on the empowerment and professionalization of the school-principal figure. In a way, the school principal has become the main *locus* of school autonomy development, according to the official policy framework.

In Madrid, the government has also conceived school autonomy as a policy for the empowerment and professionalization of principals, but more notably as the pre-condition for school differentiation and competition. However, and paradoxically, the 'school autonomy' programme of the government of Madrid has rather promoted more educational homogeneity among schools (Prieto and Villamor, 2012). This programme has conducted to schools adopting centrally-defined bilingual education or ICT's programs due to the conditional grants and the positive publicity that the adoption of any of these two programmes implies. Overall, this

tension between school autonomy and accountability dynamics in education and its implications in terms of educational governance is something that needs further exploration and could be the object of future research.

Finally, our study shows that resistance and criticism to external standardized evaluation and test-based accountability is increasingly coming from educational agents that go beyond teachers' unions. Families, psycho-pedagogic associations and philanthropic organisations are becoming more involved in the politics of education sphere as a consequence of the enactment and intensification of accountability reforms. Many of these actors are concerned with test-based accountability promoting the standardization of learning and undermining innovation in education, and advocate alternative forms of accountability and evaluation that are more strongly committed to equity and social justice (see Lingard et al 2016). Future research could address the nature of new political subjectivities, policy alternatives and forms of collective action that are emerging around the accountability debate and, ultimately, what is their role and influence in education reform processes.

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CHAPTER 4: POLICY ADOPTION AND INSTRUMENTATION – THE MADRID CASE IN DEPTH

Pagès, M., & Prieto, M. (2020). The instrumentation of global education reforms: an analysis of school autonomy with accountability policies in Spanish education. *Educational Review, 72*(6), 671-690.

The Instrumentation of Global Education Reforms: An analysis of School Autonomy with Accountability Policies in Spanish Education

This paper analyses, from the perspective of the political sociology of policy instruments, the adoption and re-contextualization of School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) reforms in Spain, with a particular focus on the region of Madrid. Over the last few decades, Madrid has adopted a wide range of education policies that have contributed to consolidate a market-oriented approach in the governance of the educational system. This paper analyses the instrumentation and complex interaction between standardized tests, test-based accountability, school choice and school autonomy in advancing this governance shift. The main objective of the paper is twofold: first, to trace the policy trajectory of SAWA reforms in Spain and Madrid; and second, to identify the rationale of the reform and its related policy ontology in relation to the selection and articulation of different policy instruments as well as the governance implications of these choices. Methodologically, we have conducted a policy analysis case study, analysing data from a set of 35 original interviews with education policymakers and key policy actors, combined with document analysis. The results of our research show how the policy preferences of domestic political actors and the legacies of the politico-administrative regimes, mediate the final form and uses of the SAWA policy instruments. These policy instruments can be conceptualised as 'life objects' whose development and uses are attached to context specific – and sometimes contradictory – political objectives and rationales.

Keywords: Policy Instruments, Test Based Accountability, School Autonomy, School Choice, Education Governance.

Introduction

The process of globalisation in the fields of policy, economy and culture has resulted in profound changes in the education sector. The emergence of supranational actors promoting education reforms and the consolidation of multi-scalar interdependence in governance activities has indicated that education policy and education reform is no longer –exclusively– a matter of nation-states. Non-state actors are increasingly involved in the design and dissemination of policy ideas, instruments and tools, which travel in transnational spaces and change throughout their journeys (Peck & Theodore, 2010). Dynamics of policy "borrowing" and "lending" take place, resulting in specific forms of "reception" and "translation" of global policies in national contexts and their related policy spaces (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; 2014). In this context, education reform paradigms, such as the so-called Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2016; Fuller & Stevenson, 2019) or School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) policies, have spread and *moved* across countries.

SAWA policies are good examples of ongoing globalising policy dynamics in the education sector, becoming common policy solutions, aimed at addressing many problems that education systems and countries face around the world. According to the OECD (2010) "many school systems have moved away from a model of purely administrative control towards one where schools become more autonomous organisations, accountable to their users and to the public for outcomes" (p. 105). Governments are adopting SAWA reforms to allow educational actors, such as school principals and teachers, to take decisions in matters of educational provision and instruction and at the same time, these educational actors are made accountable, in order to ensure the quality and efficiency of their decisions, usually in terms of educational performance. To achieve these performative intentions, SAWA tends to be adopted together with learning standards and more prescribed curricula (Sahlberg, 2011). International Organizations are promoting the use of these kinds of instruments in order to improve education results and raise standards in the quality of education. The OECD is playing a key role in the dissemination of these policies, especially through the consolidation of PISA, which has become an influential policy tool with great impact at national level. Sellar and Lingard (2014) argue that the OECD is

gaining influence in a global education policy field, by generating a sort of "epistemological governance" and "unfolding the scope, scale and explanatory power of PISA" (p. 931). Other authors outline how PISA is becoming an indirect policy tool to govern education systems by numbers on a national and international scale (Grek, 2009). Indeed, in numerous countries, PISA is "being used and integrated within national/federal policies and practices of assessment and evaluation, curriculum standards and performance targets" (Breakspear, 2012, p. 27).

SAWA reforms are broadly informed by New Public Management principles and accordingly, promote (i) higher levels of competition among schools; (ii) an increasing process of education standardization, as well as a focus on "core subjects"; (iii) the emulation of private sector management models and (iv) the implementation of test-based accountability measures (Sahlberg, 2016, p.138). Verger, Parcerisa et al. (2019) point out that standards, decentralization and accountability are core components of ongoing global education reforms. These principles are articulated with the use of national large-scale assessments, which are increasingly adopted in a wide range of settings, as a means of exerting performative and accountability pressure on school actors (Verger, Parcerisa & Fontdevila, 2019; Allan & Artiles, 2016).

Test-based accountability (TBA) is currently the predominant model of accountability[47] (Thrupp, 2018; Smith, 2016; Lingard & Lewis, 2016) grounded on the assumption that education systems could be evaluated and held accountable on the basis of the assessment of students' results in external and standardised national tests (Hamilton et al., 2002). Thus, TBA is assumed to be an external policy instrument to monitor and improve education quality and performance. TBA can also contribute to promoting market dynamics in education (Harris & Herington, 2006; Maroy & Voisin, 2017), for example, with the publication of school performance results as a means of providing information to parents, to exert school choice (West et al., 2011).

[47] The concept of accountability is defined as a "relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences" (Bovens, 2007, p. 450).

Despite such global status, SAWA reforms are not monolithic and are adapted and re-configured differently, according to educational realities. The implementation and re-contextualization of SAWA is not univocal; it rather presents "very diverse policy configurations in different settings" (Verger & Normand, 2015, p. 603), according to political, economic and cultural contingencies (Gunter et al., 2016).

Due to the diversity of school autonomy and accountability policy instruments in terms of design, implementation and evolution, more research on the *instrumentation* of these policies is required. This policy instrumentation approach focuses on understanding why and how policy instruments, such as national assessments and accountability are selected and how their uses evolve or even deviate from their initially intended uses (Verger, Fontdevila & Parcerisa, 2019). The article aims to develop this research strand by focusing on the adoption and re-contextualization of SAWA reforms in Spanish education, with a focus on the region of Madrid, where these reforms were explicitly articulated with pro-school choice policies. The study of educational reform in Madrid is relevant for two main reasons. Firstly, Madrilenian education reform is a paradigmatic example of a market-oriented SAWA model, based on pro-school choice policies and accountability mechanisms (Verger, Prieto, Pagès & Villamor, 2018), under the assumption that "school choice combined with external performance standards measured by standardised tests, leads to better learning for all" (Sahlberg, 2016, p. 137). Secondly, Madrid is an exception in the context of Spanish education, traditionally more reluctant to carry out market-based accountability reforms. In fact, Spain could be classified as part of the so-called Napoleonic administrative tradition, which is characterised by hierarchical, uniform bureaucracies and public services that are reluctant to be ruled according to performance criteria (Ongaro, 2010; Pollitt, 2007; Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019). Therefore, this paper aims to understand the circumstances that make Madrid to partially deviate from the public administration model that predominates in Spain and to a greater extent in the South of Europe.

The main objectives of the paper are (i) to trace the policy trajectory of SAWA reforms in Spain and Madrid and (ii) to identify the policy rationale[48] of the reform and its related policy ontology, in relation to the selection and articulation of different accountability policy instruments, as well as the governance implications of these choices.

To address these issues, the paper is organised into five main sections. The first section includes the theoretical and analytical approach of the study, which is based on a political sociology approach to policy instruments. In a second section, we present the methodological strategy of the research, which is followed by a contextualization of our case study. The main results of the study are presented in the fourth section of the paper in relation to the different aspects: (i) the main factors behind policy change; (ii) the process of policy instrumentation and the rationale behind it and (iii) the partial retention and consolidation of the policy changes introduced. The final section discusses the results provided and outlines the main conclusions of our case study.

Analytical Approach: A Political Sociology of Policy Instruments

A political sociology perspective focuses on analysing the ways in which power is exerted, developed and contested by different actors with divergent or contingent interests in a given policy context. Max Weber's contributions to power and legitimacy represent a point of departure of this perspective, outlining the rational-legal forms of legitimacy as the main source of power in capitalists' societies and problematising "public policy instruments as a technique for domination" (Le Galès, 2011, p. 147). The shift from government to governance, the rise of new policy actors and the changing nature of the state and its governing activities, renewed interest in "how governance is operationalised" (p. 142) through specific tools, devices and policy techniques which constitute *policy instruments.*

A classical functionalist perspective on the analysis of public policies, tends to focus on the effectiveness of policy instruments, in order to identify "what works" and "best practices" to address policy problems. From this functionalist approach, the policy process follows a rational

[48] By rationale we refer to taken for granted ideas about a given policy problem, the main reasons, ideas and principles behind the selection and subsequent privileging of a certain policy option and the projected expectations as a result of a policy solution.

orientation in which policymakers and other policy actors choose those instruments which better address the problems to be solved. This rationalistic perspective assumes policies and policy instruments to be "neutral" and "natural" in the sense that they are conceptualised as mere "technical devices", which precede those who implement and develop them and hence are "at disposal" of experts, technicians and policy makers to address and solve a wide range of policy problems (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, pg. 3). On the contrary, a political sociology perspective of policy instruments suggests that we need to problematise the choice, design and effects of policy instruments. According to this perspective we can define public policy instruments as:

> a device that is both technical and social, that organises specific social relations between the state and those it is addressed to, according to the representations and meanings it carries. It is a particular type of institution, a technical device with the generic purpose of carrying a concrete concept of the politics/society relationship and sustained by a concept of regulation (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 4).

Hence, policy instruments are defined as institutions in the sociological sense, because they define a set of rules, expectations and regulations, as well as orient the behaviour and the action of agents. Policy instruments are developed by actors with specific governing purposes and hence "constitute a condensed form of knowledge about social control and the ways of exercising it" (Le Galès, 2011, p. 151). The aims and designs of policy instruments generate second order and unintended effects, which is the reason why policy instruments are conceptualised as living objects, as they tend to increasingly gain autonomy from their initial intended objectives and generate new uses and practices. Therefore, policy instruments "have impacts on their own, independent from the policy goals" (Le Galès, 2011, p. 151). Such unintended effects tend to privilege some actors and behaviours over others, reason why policy instruments cannot be conceptualised as mere technical, flat and neutral devices but as socially constructed policy technologies that define certain "forms of power" (Kassim & Le Galès, 2010, p. 5). Hence, the policy instruments approach aims to understand how specific forms of government work as policy technologies, to define the agents' behaviours and relationships among actors, with unequal distributions of knowledge and power.

A political sociology of policy instruments is mainly concerned with problematising the choices of a given set of policy instruments in order to understand how and why certain policy tools are privileged above others, under what rationales, purposes and motivations as well as the evolving uses and effects of such instruments. This process, known as *policy instrumentation*, "involves not only understanding the reasons that drive towards retaining one instrument rather than another, but also envisaging the effects produced by these choices" (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 4).

The analysis of policy instrumentation is combined in this paper with a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) perspective to disentangle how ideational and material factors are interrelated in the conformation of specific institutional change in the cultural, political and economic domains, through the evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection and retention (Jessop, 2010).

Recent research has addressed the global spread of data-intensive policy instruments in the governance of education systems, with the introduction of national large-scale assessments and test-based accountability mechanisms, based on the performance of students in external and standardised national tests (Maroy and Pons, 2019; Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019). These policy instruments also include other governance related education policies including decentralization and school autonomy, accountability mechanisms and prescribed learning standards (Sahlberg 2016; Verger, Parcerisa et al., 2019). However, the motivations, trajectories and sedimentation of these instruments seem to be related to the politico-administrative legacies of states (Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019). In this article, we aim to problematise the process of education reform in Madrid, combining an analysis of the policy instrumentation with the CPE, in order to understand the re-contextualization of SAWA policies.

Methodological strategy

Methodologically speaking, our research is informed by Stephen Ball's policy sociology approach to policy trajectories and, specifically, by his more recent work on network ethnography. Ball's work does not only encourage us to understand the global hegemony

acquired by certain policy solutions, but also to 'follow' the trajectory of these policy solutions and understand the bricolage dynamics involved in their local re-contextualisation (Ball, 1998; Ball, Junemann & Santori, 2017). Inspired by these accounts, in this study, we trace the political rationales and the ideational sources behind the education reforms carried out in Madrid in the last two decades, in order to understand which components of the SAWA global model have been selected and retained, and how they have been transformed over time.

The data collected combines primary and secondary data, based on semi-structured interviews with policy actors and key stakeholders (n=35) and document analysis (n=12). Regarding the interviews, the selection of participants was based on theoretical and qualitative criteria, according to the importance of the actors involved in the policy process. We selected participants according to their expertise and experience regarding the reform process. Moreover, a snowball sampling strategy was adopted in order to enrich the sample of participants and avoid selection bias. The final sample of participants included key informants of a different nature as specified below:

Table 1: Interviews and Key Informants

Type of Key Informants	Number of Interviews
Experts / Academics	5
Educational Stakeholders	11
Teachers' Unions	3
Government Advisory Committee	3
Policymakers	8
Top-level Politicians	5

Source: own elaboration.

The data collection was guided through a semi-structured interview script, aimed at encompassing different dimensions which included (i) individual background; (ii) main aspects

of the policy formation process; (iii) subjective opinions and perceptions and (iv) different actors' roles, sources of information and policy inspirations (Fontdevila, 2019). The interviews were complemented with document analysis of key education legislation from Madrid, related to school autonomy, standardised tests and school choice (n=5) and parliamentarian debates, focusing on the policy instruments analysed (n=3). Other complementary documents were selected, due to the uniqueness of their content, including press releases (n=1), as well as public hearings and reports from the Madrilenian Education Administration (n=4).

The analysis was conducted with specialised software of qualitative data analysis using memos, emerging codes and previously defined analytical codes as the main data analysis instrument. Some of the data collected were used to inform researchers on contextual and policy conjunctures, while other data provided more in-depth information about the policy process. Due to the considerable amount of textual data, only the most paradigmatic citations were selected to illustrate the main findings of the research.

The Context of Spanish Education

In this section we present the most relevant features of the education system in Spain, regarding our research objectives. The Spanish education system is characterised by important levels of decentralization in education. Since the approval of the Constitution in 1978, a process of political decentralization began giving political status to regional level institutions, defining seventeen Autonomous Communities. This decentralization process followed a political and territorial rationale and was not adopted for public administration reform motivations or NPM convictions. In the education sector, decentralization has implied a division of competences in which the state-central powers define the structure of the education system and its basic principles, as well as the general content of the curricula, whereas the Autonomous Communities focus on the regulation of educational provision and school governance.

Another important feature of the Spanish education system is the strong and historical presence of publicly funded private schools, which convert this system into a paradigmatic case of the so-called Historical Public-Private Partnership (PPP) (Verger et al., 2016). This model of education

provision implies the coexistence of two different networks of schooling, one public, in terms of funding and management; the other publicly funded but privately managed, mostly by religious catholic institutions[49], and with specific regulatory features particularly relevant in terms of school autonomy[50]. This model, together with the practices of students' selection (Benito & González, 2007) and the exit of middle class families from certain public schools, have generated high levels of school segregation, which is especially relevant in urban areas, such as Madrid (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018).

The politicization of the educational debate in Spain is highly polarised and has its contemporary roots in the 1980s, when the democratic transition coincided with a period of educational expansion and the configuration of a new, post-dictatorship education system. In this period, different interest groups emerged to advance their preferences, highlighting two major perspectives, the conservative and the progressive (Bonal, 2000). The former defended freedom in education and was represented at that time by the political precedents of the Popular Party; the latter upheld equity and was enacted by the Spanish Social-Democratic Party. Social-democratic laws enacted in the 1980s and 1990s at national level prioritised issues of equity and participation in education, defining the grounds of the comprehensive school and establishing school councils as bodies of representation, decision-making and participation for families,

[49]The historical retreat of the State from education provision and the traditional role of the Catholic Church in providing education had configured a dual system of schooling. According to Verger et al. (2016) in areas such as Madrid, regional governments took advantage of this legacy to consolidate a dynamic of "education privatization expansion" (p. 115). As a result, and according to official data, the percentage of students enrolled in publicly funded private schools is 37% in Madrid, while the average in Spain is 29%. In the case of private schools, the percentage of students in Madrid is 10% while the average in Spain falls to 4%. Although traditionally publicly funded private schools were Catholic, from 2005 to 2012 this trend may have changed. According to Carpintero and Siemiatycki (2015), among the new private schools funded by the educational authorities during this period, only the 24% were institutions related to the Catholic church, while 34% were cooperatives of teachers, and 42% private companies. However, most publicly funded private schools are still Catholic institutions.

[50] Regarding the regulatory framework of publically subsidised private schools, two main aspects have traditionally played a key role in terms of school autonomy. First of all, the funding scheme is a *de facto* a co-funding model between the state and families. Although in legal terms publicly funded private schools must be free for families and students, these schools usually ask for a voluntary contribution, with amounts that vary depending on the type of school and the socioeconomic profile of the families. Despite the voluntary character of these contributions, most of families assume it, what gives these schools greater economic and management autonomy. Secondly, these schools have traditionally enjoyed autonomy in the recruitment of teachers, in contrast to public schools, which get their teachers from a centralized system. Both types of management autonomy, economic and teachers' selection, tended to benefit publicly funded private schools, which can often better adapt to families demands.

teachers and students. On the other hand, the most recent laws approved by the Popular Party have developed measures focusing on two different political perspectives: *neoliberal*, such as parents' choice, school competition, deregulation and privatization; and *neoconservative*, advocating a 'back to basics' curriculum model, accountability, standardization and promotion of Catholic schools (Viñao, 2016; Puelles Benítez, 2016). This dual policy of the Spanish Popular Party, with its many analogies with the English New Right (Puelles Benítez, 2005), characterises both Spanish and Madrilenian educational policies, with constant tension in the implementation of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies, as our research will indicate.

Interestingly, school autonomy, despite not being central to Spanish education legislation traditionally, is progressively gaining in importance (Verger et al., 2018; Prieto & Villamor, 2018; Bolívar, 2006). SAWA policies are becoming more common among both the Left and the Right in Spanish education, even though the classic political dualism remains in its different interpretations and implementations. The social-democratic approach to SAWA policies consisted of an ambiguous definition of pedagogical school autonomy, combined with the introduction of external tests for diagnosis purposes. By contrast, the conservative reforms had intended to implement school autonomy with curricular specialization, diversification strategies, higher stakes accountability mechanisms and common core standards. However, despite various attempts, the conservative approach to SAWA policies has not been consolidated at national level.

Within this political and regulative context, the region of Madrid began formulating education legislation in the decade following the year 2000, when educational competences were transferred to the regional administration, governed by the Popular Party since 1995. In the next section, we will elucidate how this process evolved and the rationale behind the selection and development of different policy instruments, associated with the SAWA reform of the regional educational system.

The Instrumentation and Evolution of SAWA Reforms in Madrid

In this section, we present the main results of our research. We analyse various factors that contributed to policy change, the policy instrumentation and the evolution of policy instruments implemented in the Madrilenian education system.

Variation Factors and Key Policy Changes

In the early 2000s, three key events enabled the education authorities to initiate a deep governance reform in the Madrilenian educational system. Firstly, in 2000 culminated the process of educational decentralization in Spain, which opened a window of opportunity for education policy reforms at regional level. Secondly, in 2001, the first PISA results were published and were used instrumentally by political authorities as an opportunity for policy change, given that the results were somehow disappointing by comparison with international standards. Thirdly, in 2002, a new conservative reform, the Quality Education Law (LOCE) was enacted at national level. The legal framework of this national reform was used to develop some of the most polemic education measures in Madrid, such as the publication of the external standardised test results. In 2003, Esperanza Aguirre, leader of the regional Popular Party became the President of Madrid. During the three terms that she would spend in office, her government would advance an educational reform, based on a combination of TBA, school autonomy and School Choice policies.

In terms of policy trajectory, we identify two different periods which promoted SAWA reforms and accountability mechanisms, with different policy approaches. A critical point of departure is identified in 2005, when TBA was introduced through the implementation of an external test, the so-called Basic Knowledge and Skills Test (the Spanish acronym for which is CDI). The CDI was designed as an external, standardised and census-based evaluation, having been implemented in the 6th Grade of primary education since 2005 and in the 3rd grade of secondary education since 2008. The transparency of the test results in different formats and the publication of a school ranking during the first period of the reform, developed a model of high stakes accountability, generating great opposition amongst teachers' unions, pedagogic

associations and families (Verger et al., 2018). Together with the introduction of TBA, a 'back to basics' curriculum model was enacted through the introduction of the Fundamental Knowledge and Skills Standards for Spanish Language and Mathematics "aimed, in a very significant manner, to improve the results of external evaluations" (Policy Document 4).[51]

During a second period of education reform, from 2007 to 2015, TBA was complemented with the introduction of other school measures and policy instruments that contributed to the enhancement of school competition. In this case, the CDI test was operated in tandem with the introduction of new policies and instruments of school choice and school autonomy. During this period we witnessed the development of another component of the SAWA agenda in the context of Madrid, when the focus of education reform shifted from education standardization and control over the curricula, to a new emphasis on school choice. The policy instrumentation and the rationales for the selection of different policy instruments implemented during this process of education reform are analysed below.

The Construction of an Educational Policy Problem

The implementation of the standardised test was founded on a basic assumption, which presumed a problem of education quality due to the low levels of student performance in terms of basic skills and essential knowledge. This "problem" had already been denounced by a group of policy makers and intellectuals, grouped under the *Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis*, a salient Spanish think tank advocating neo-liberal education reforms (Olmedo & Grau, 2013; Saura, 2015). The Foundation is still chaired by Jose María Aznar, outstanding member of the Popular Party and President of Spain between 1996 and 2004, the period in which the conservative education reform (LOCE) was enacted and in which Aguirre acted as

51 http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-disposition&blobheadername2=cadena&blobheadervalue1=filename%3Dres+estandares.pdf&blobheadervalue2=language%3Des%26site%3DTurismo&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1158626404767&ssbinary=true

Minister of Education at national level before to became President of Madrid. Various members of the Foundation argued that the comprehensive education system, developed by the Spanish Social-Democratic Party since 1990, had undermined the quality of the education system by imposing the principle of equality. The Foundation also advocated the need to regain the conservative principles of effort, merit, discipline and authority in order to restore students' commitment to learning (Delibes, 2008). Most of those advocates were based in Madrid and served in different positions of the national and the regional governments when the Popular Party was in office, allowing for continuity between national and regional policies.

In the case of Madrid, the education administration cited an Internal Report of the School Inspection Body, published in 2004, to explain and justify the need for the introduction of an external and standardised test. Accordingly, the levels of students' performance were below minimum standards in the main areas of knowledge (Delibes, 2005; 2008), due to the social-democratic approach to education reform, responsible for lowering standards in favour of equity and comprehensive education. As stated by a key informant with top-level political responsibilities during the process of education reform in Madrid:

> For social democrats, equality is a fundamental objective, hence if you want all children to learn the same, you only have a single solution, which is to lower the standards and make all children learn less (Politician 5).

More specifically, Aguirre's Administration suggested that school dropout levels, the "educational failure" and the low standards in secondary education were a consequence of the poor quality of primary education, which should be tackled by introducing an external test, in order to identify and address the problems of education quality and increase standards.

The introduction of the CDI test was supported by the use of the PISA results, framed as an indicator to identify the "problems" of education quality in Madrid. PISA results were used several times in the Regional Parliament as an indicator of the poor quality of education and as an argument to legitimise the enforcement of "needed measures" to "formulate a diagnostic and

apply a treatment"[52]. Surprisingly, the use of PISA to identify the problems in the Madrilenian education system was totally out of context, since the results reported in PISA 2000 and 2003 were referred to the whole national context. Madrid had not participated in PISA with its own sample until 2009 and therefore the results could not be mechanically extrapolated at regional level.

SAWA as an Umbrella Policy Solution for Diverse Purposes

The construction of a learning crisis narrative contributed to define an imperative for policy change that required new policy solutions. In this context, the CDI test was framed as a feasible and desirable policy instrument to identify aspects of improvement and change the school governance dynamics. Hence, the introduction of an external standardised test in primary education, with clear learning standards attached, was presented as a core component of a broader strategy to enhance schools, teachers and students to trigger and develop a better "culture of effort" that would ensure an improvement of students' performance. Hence, the education authorities expected that the implementation of the test would "enhance transparency in results" and "improve education quality"[53]. In order to do so, public authorities defined the basic learning standards in language and maths and stablished the implementation of the CDI test in order *"to control through external evaluations the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills"*[54]and inform families' school choices. In this sense, the selection of TBA as a policy solution was seen as a way to encompass two different main objectives:

> The two fundamental ideas were to reinforce knowledge and persevere on instruction, which is not a sin, and then to facilitate families' school choice. To give greater school choice (*Policy Maker 8*).

[52] Diario de Sesiones de la Asamblea de Madrid Nº 419/4 de mayo de 2005, p. 12147
See: https://www.asambleamadrid.es/static/doc/publicaciones/VII-DS-419.pdf

[53] Diario de Sesiones de la Asamblea de Madrid Nº 492/22 de junio de 2005
See: https://www.asambleamadrid.es/static/doc/publicaciones/VII-DS-492.pdf

[54] Diario de Sesiones de la Asamblea de Madrid Nº 419/4 de mayo de 2005, p. 12148

This statement denotes a double (neo-conservative and neo-liberal) rationale regarding a single policy instrument. Accordingly, the use of an external and standardized test allowed at the same time the control of the learning outcomes and standards, as defended by neo-conservative positions, and the activation of the market mechanisms in education through the publication of the test results as an indicator of quality to inform parents' school choice, as defended by neo-liberal positions.

The introduction of an external standardised test was also seen as a means of emulating international "good practices" as well as a measure to improve Madrid's position in international large-scale assessments. In fact, the implementation of the CDI test was justified as a way "*to reach the Lisbon Objectives, improve the PISA results and the position of the country in this ranking".*[55] In the same direction, a key informant from the regional education administration stated that initially, the main aim of the test was to "*achieve a certain level for all the students and to accomplish the curriculum"* but it gradually evolved as a way to *"improve the results when comparing it with international tests" (Policy Maker 3).*

Specifically, the rationale behind the use of the CDI test focused on the following elements: i) the introduction of an external test with publication of the results, would be an external incentive for schools, teachers and students to improve performance; ii) the definition of a set of learning standards would help teachers ensure the development of basic common skills and knowledge among students; iii) the data provided would help schools and the administration to identify weaknesses and aspects for improvement and (iv) the publication of the results would guide families' school choices.

To put this rationale into practice, the results of the test were posted publicly and since 2011, have been published in a school browser that restricted the classification of schools but facilitated a comparison between a limited number of schools according to the test results, the schools' programmes offered and information regarding school demand. From the policy

[55] DIARIO DE SESIONES DE LA ASAMBLEA DE MADRID/Nº 419/4 de mayo de 2005 p. 12158

See: https://www.asambleamadrid.es/static/doc/publicaciones/VII-DS-419.pdf

instruments approach, we can understand TBA in Madrid as a general policy instrument, functioning by means of certain techniques or "concrete devices", such as the CDI test, which used specific tools understood as "micro devices" (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 4), primarily, the scores of schools, the ranking classification or the schools' browser. Hence, such a policy instrument was explicitly aimed at enhancing, channelling and regulating families' behaviour regarding school choice.

In conjunction with such accountability instruments, different school autonomy programmes were enacted (first initiated with the English-Spanish Bilingual Programme and then continued with other specialization programmes, based on ICT or sports) and the extent of families' school choices broadened, implementing a single school choice area in the whole region of Madrid. The rationale or *raison d'etre* of these measures was the promotion of freedom in education, considered as an intrinsic and superior value by the public authorities. Freedom in education was understood, under a classic liberal approach, as the right for parents to choose school beyond state over-regulations:

> We believe that the State is not responsible for education. No-one other than families are responsible for the education of their children and this is why they have the right to choose (Politician 5).

According to the policy rationale of the education administration, the transparency of the CDI test was a way of informing families about school choice, which, in turn, required measures of school autonomy to ensure a plurality of options to exert "real choice" between different options. Interestingly, in the official discourse, the idea of school choice was not directly related to the improvement of education but to the intrinsic value of freedom in education.[56]

During the process of education reform, the PISA results and the OECD recommendations were also used as a point of reference and as a policy legitimation device. If in the first period of the reform, the PISA results were used as evidence to build an education crisis narrative, in the

[56] This position is well exemplified in several public statements of President Aguirre, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eOmdh21bUs

second period they were used to demonstrate that educational policies have reported the expected outcomes. In 2009, Madrid started undertaking PISA tests with its own sample and its results were notably good and above the Spanish average. In this context, the results were used as confirmatory evidence of the positive effects of Aguirre's education reform. Despite the obvious problems of attribution and causation, the PISA results were presented as "an endorsement of the educational policy that has been developed in Madrid during the last 7 years"[57]. This case is an illustrative example of a particular dynamic of policy "instrumentalisation" and "selectivity" of PISA reported in Spanish education (cf Bonal & Tarabini, 2013). Paradigmatic evidence of this strategy is reflected in an official press release of the Regional Education Department, which announced the publication of the CDI test results. This press release stresses that "the PISA report advises the development of an external test such as the CDI to improve students learning" as is the case "in the majority of countries of the OECD". The selective use of "reference societies" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016) to emulate and legitimise TBA can also be observed in this official media release, where it is stated that *"many OECD countries, including Germany, the United States, Canada, Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom carry out this type of test and in 21 of these countries the results are published"*. The press release concludes citing the 2010 PISA report, outlining that "*combining school autonomy with accountability through external and standardised tests improve student learning*" (Policy Document 1).[58]

[57] DIARIO DE SESIONES DE LA ASAMBLEA DE MADRID / Nº 810 / 16 de diciembre de 2010, p. 23622.
See: https://www.asambleamadrid.es/static/doc/publicaciones/VIII-DS-810.pdf

[58] http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadervalue1=filename%3D111226+PUBLICACI%C3%93N+RESULTADOS+CDI+PRIMARIA.pdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1310778161403&ssbinary=true

The Role of Political Leadership and Individual Factors

Finally, regarding the main factors explaining the policy instrumentation of accountability education reforms in Madrid, it is also essential to stress the personal leading role of President Aguirre, as well as that of her closest policy advisors. Several informants noted that the main initiative to adopt the external and standardised test was led by Aguirre, who was politically influenced by Anglo-Saxon education reform and personally inspired by Margaret Thatcher as a political figure.

> Aguirre has an emotional bond with the United Kingdom and she values the model of English education in which the culture of evaluation is very important (…). Madrid pioneered this reform because there was a President very engaged with this issue and a team who did our best without thinking about political correctness (Politician 3).

In fact, the personal role and policy leadership of decision-makers and advisory teams with regard to policy instrumentation is not a new issue. Linder and Peters (1989) suggest that individual variables need to be taken into account in order to understand the policy process and the preferences for adopting certain policy instruments over others. In this sense, it is important to identify the key actors of the policy instrumentation process, considering the interrelationship between systemic factors and individual variables. Hence, identifying the role, background and cognitive factors of key players is essential in understanding how "an instrument's meaning and appeal to decision-makers can ultimately be traced to individual perceptions and the subjective values that reinforce them" (p. 35).

In the case of Madrid, the leadership and the political preferences of Aguirre exerted a great deal of influence. Educated at Madrid's British Council School and being a member of the Madrid Liberal Club and the Liberal Union Party in her early political years (cf Drake, 2006), Aguirre's personal and political background is key to understanding her policy references and preferences, as well as the ideological orientation of education reform in Madrid, including the choices and specifications of particular policy instruments. Regarding her political career, we need to consider that she had previously been the Spanish Minister of Education, a position in which she initiated a reform to promote parents' freedom of choice at national level, although

she did not succeed in implementing this legislation at the time. Nevertheless, when she became President of Madrid, she found a window of opportunity to materialise her project in the region, endorsed by the Conservative National Law, enacted in 2002.

In summary, the process of education reform during the period of the Aguirre mandates contributed to the consolidation of a market-oriented education model based on a juxtaposition of multiple SAWA policy instruments that combined different policy rationales. Under the conservative rationale, TBA was used to achieve standards set by the administration in 2005 and to guarantee that the contents defined in the curriculum were being covered at schools. In parallel, the results of the test were posted publicly in order to inform families' choices and activate market mechanisms. Finally, different programmes of school autonomy were enacted under a "restrictive" logic (Prieto & Villamor, 2018), based on predefined and limited programmes of school specialization. In this sense, we suggest that education reform in Madrid is a good example of the Conservative Modernization educational agenda (Apple, 2004) which in Spain, some authors described as a combination of liberal narratives to justify conservative policies (Viñao, 2012; 2016).

The Partial Retention of Accountability Policy Instruments

In contrast with the educational reform trajectory of previous years, 2015 marked a period of discontinuity and even retreat of some components of the TBA system. Regardless of a certain policy consolidation of the education reform model, some relevant changes took place. School autonomy, school specialization and parents' school choice were further consolidated during this latter period. On the contrary, TBA evolved from high to lower stakes, abandoning the transparency and publication of the test results and aligning the evaluation frame to national regulations.

In this latter phase, the lack of a clear and strong leadership in education reform gave more weight to intermediate officials with technical profiles and pragmatic orientations. Relevant policy discourses still advocated to further develop the SAWA model suggesting that "Spain should combine more school autonomy with accountability mechanisms" including the

publication of school results and establishing a "simple and deep curriculum" (Sanz & Pires, 2016). However, the Regional Education Department desisted from publishing the CDI results to ensure that the regional policy correlated with the requirements established by the last national reform. The regional education administration changed the denomination of the test and adopted a competence-based approach, in order to align the evaluation framework with international practices being "*inspired with international tests such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS" (Policy Maker 6).*

The changes regarding the approaches and uses of the test could be the result of legal, cultural, political and technical factors. The first explanation is the legal – regulative framework of the last national reform, which implied a more restrictive use of accountability policy instruments regarding its transparency and consequences. The cultural and administrative tradition of Spain is also one of the most salient barriers. South European or Napoleonic administrative regimes are characterised by centralised, hierarchical and uniform bureaucracies (Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019, p. 4), which constitute a rigid public administrative tradition. Such administrative legacy imply a salient obstacle to consolidate accountability reforms in Spain in which the *"tendency to bureaucratic control and mistrust"* represents a barrier *"to succeed at short-term a virtuous system of evaluation and accountability" (Academic 5).*

On the other hand, the political leadership is also a critical factor in understanding the lack of policy retention. Whether the role of Aguirre was key to the selection and advancement of market-accountability mechanisms, it was certainly decisive in understanding the back and fore dynamics of the policy process. Indeed, her resignation in 2012 could consequently, explain the progressive decline of the accountability stakes in Madrid. Moreover, Aguirre's policies coincided with a period of economic crisis and severe budget cuts, which together with an ambitious programme of education reform, generated a climate of school opposition and mistrust towards the educational administration, which the next regional government wished to alleviate. Indeed, the new administration recognised that important political factors influenced the decision to stop publishing test results, including the lack of social consensus among key

stakeholders and the opposition of teachers' unions and public school movements to the publication of these results:

> I think it is important to do these things with consensus and it is true that the low stakes test works better among the educational community. This seems a consensus and we have to take it into consideration (*Policy Maker 7).*

Finally, several key informants noted technical issues regarding the internal validity of the test, considering the lack of a stable and consistent design that did not allow for longitudinal comparisons and required a new evaluation instrument.

In short, a contingency of diverse factors contributed to the uneven consolidation of SAWA reforms in Madrid, especially regarding the interruption of high stakes accountability measures. Such an erratic policy trajectory evidences how, despite political and ideological engagement on a given policy reform and the strong entrepreneurship backing of the reform at a particular juncture, contextual elements, political factors and administrative traditions operate as key mediators in the consolidation (or not) of education reforms and policy instruments.

Conclusions

Spain has not been an early adopter of NPM reforms in education. However, over the last few decades, different Spanish regions are adopting test-based accountability, school autonomy and pro-school choice policies, following an NPM approach (Luengo & Saura, 2012; Prieto & Villamor, 2018; Verger & Curran, 2014; Verger et al., 2018). The analysis provided in this paper contributes to current debates on the policy process of SAWA reforms and the use of accountability policy instruments in Madrid, that have profound political implications.

Firstly, the case studied shows that the adoption of SAWA policies does not just respond to matters of rational suitability, neither is it the result of mere emulation dynamics. Policy adoption needs to be problematised and analysed in order to understand the motives behind the selection of certain policies and the specific features they acquire according to the context (Verger, 2016). Our analysis suggests that SAWA reforms in Madrid have been adopted with a complex, evolving and not always coherent set of policy rationales, attached to the deployment

and layering of diverse devices and policy instruments. The rationales of SAWA reforms in Madrid condense two apparently contradictory mandates. TBA was initially intended to achieve standards and control the curriculum delivery, implying certain levels of standardization and back to basics dynamics, under a neo-conservative policy approach. However, the publication of the test results in order to improve and orient school choice resulted in promoting greater levels of school autonomy and specialization and reinforced the pro-market orientation of the reform. Here a tension emerged between, on the one hand, control and standardization and on the other, autonomy and specialization. This tension in the field of policy reflected the corresponding tension in the field of politics, which condensed neo-conservatives and neo-liberal principles in education under the so-called conservative modernization education agenda (Apple, 2004).

Secondly, our findings contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the different political scales implied in the policy process, especially regarding the relationship between international and domestic education spheres. In this regard, our study shows how current educational reforms are configured by an evolving interaction between international policy models, domestic policy preferences and strategic agenda setting. In the case of Madrid, a global model of education reform – SAWA policies and TBA – has been adapted to accommodate domestic policy preferences – school choice policies and school specialization– using international references, particularly PISA, to justify a particular approach to education reform. The results of this paper support the well-known key role of PISA in recent education reforms in many Western countries (Breakspear, 2012; Grek, 2009; Lingard & Sellar, 2016). However, consideration must be given to the fact that the uses of PISA can vary during the reform process. Initially, PISA results served to legitimise the learning crisis narrative, the introduction of a standardized test, TBA and a back to basics curriculum model, based mainly on core knowledge. Later, PISA results were used, politically, to prove the success of the reform. Lastly, and more technically speaking, PISA was used as a reference for (re)designing the national and regional standardised tests, based on competences. The latter use of the PISA results shows that the regional and national education administration assumed the inherent PISA/OECD logics for designing the assessment tools in order "to accomplish with

predominant international norms and discourses of education governance" (Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019, p. 15). Moreover, the multiple and "divergent uses of PISA in specific contexts" (Carvalho & Costa, 2015) explain the attractiveness of this international large-scale test. Overall, this piece of research illustrates how PISA has been instrumentalised for domestic actors in order to "scandalise" and "glorify" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003) the education system, to first start a process of education reform and secondly, legitimise the orientation of the policies, adopted in the context of the reform.

Thirdly, the results nuance the conception of policy instruments as institutions that have an autonomous life "independently of their stated objectives" and generating particular dynamics "structuring public policy according to their own logic" (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). As in other cases, this process of policy restructuring is generated by an incremental and cumulative use of different policy instruments "not necessarily articulated in a predefined reform programme" (Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019, p. 16) but with a wide-reaching and diverse impact on the educational governance architecture. In the case of Madrid, this incremental reform took place combining TBA policy instruments with school choice, specialization and school autonomy and generated a profound change in the governance of the education system. Nonetheless, the evolution of such instruments has been highly reliant on political contingencies and agendas.

Finally, the partial retention of accountability policy instruments supports the hypothesis of politico-administrative legacies as key mediating factors, explaining policy retention. Spain and Madrid, as part of the Napoleonic administrative tradition present a late and erratic process of managerial education reform, in which the implementation of accountability instruments has been uneven and highly conditioned by political contestation (Verger, Fontdevila et al., 2019, p. 8). Therefore, the strong leadership and entrepreneurship of President Aguirre could initially explain the first developments of education reform and policy instrumentation. However, political factors regarding social consensus and national legal frameworks hindered the consolidation of high stakes accountability policy instruments. Hence, path dependency and systemic factors prevailed and played a greater role in the phase of policy retention of

accountability tools, adapting the uses and orientations of policy instruments to the administrative context, whereas market mechanisms have been routinised and reached deeper policy consolidation. In this sense, and despite the aforementioned back and forth dynamics regarding accountability stakes, TBA is still a salient policy instrument in the governance of the education system in Madrid and still coexists with school choice, specialization and school autonomy policies. However, the nature of the effects and effectiveness of these policies still needs to be analysed. Since policy instruments are not neutral tools and they produce changing power relations among different actors, more research is needed to understand the evolving relational dynamics among schools, teachers, families and students within SAWA regimes. Exploring the relations of test-based accountability, school autonomy and school choice in different school contexts, is a challenge for future research. Specifically, further research should explore how teachers, schools and families enact and respond to SAWA reforms and by doing so, identify the implications of these reforms in terms of educational equity and quality.

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CHAPTER 5: THE IMPACTS OF SAWA POLICIES IN THE LOCAL EDUCATION MARKETS

Pagès, M., Ferrer-Esteban, G., Prieto, M., Verger, A., "Schools' logics of action and post-bureaucratic governance: Emerging instruments, tensions and forms of segmentation in local education markets. *Working paper to be sumited in the British Jounral of Sociology of Education.*

Schools' Logics of Action and Post-bureaucratic Governance: Emerging Instruments, Tensions and Forms of Segmentation in Local Education Markets

Abstract: School systems are shifting towards post-bureaucratic forms of governance, which imply higher levels of decentralization and school autonomy, together with forms of administrative accountability and external evaluation. Post-bureaucratic governance is also conducive to more freedom of school choice, which may empower families as account holders in front of schools. Under this emerging regulatory framework, schools are involved in competitive dynamics and are likely to face greater levels of external pressure from the policy environment and the market. Schools can experience such pressures unevenly, according to internal organisational characteristics and to the configuration of the reference local education market, and therefore may respond differently.

We make sense of this phenomenon through the notion of schools' logics of action, understood as an ex post facto reconstruction that considers a broad set of practices, activities and routines through which schools address competitive interdependences (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009). The objectives of the paper are: firstly, to determine the diverse factors explaining how schools are positioned in the local education market; secondly, to uncover the predominant logics of action that schools articulate in response to both the most immediate competitive pressures they face, and their position in the marketplace; thirdly, to identify the main tensions that emerge when schools need to navigate around what they experience as inconsistent and often contradicting sources of pressure.

In order to address these interrelated objectives, the paper develops a case study conducted in the metropolitan area of Madrid. The study is based on qualitative interviews and survey responses, and proposes an innovative index to position schools in local education market hierarchies. The results show that schools in Madrid may articulate a broad range of logics of action, and that the conditions for the emergence of each logic is largely influenced by the schools' position in the education marketplace. The study also identifies the main challenges

that schools aim to address in each market segment, and the main educational and organizational practices which they aim to employ. Finally, the paper highlights the tensions emerging within schools' logics of action, as a way to reflect on the complexity and mutability of organizational behaviour in educational settings.

Keywords: logics of action, local education markets, post-bureaucratic governance, school accountability, school choice

Introduction

Post-bureaucratic forms of governance aim to make schools and teachers more responsive and accountable to educational authorities and families. This is achieved through the use of novel governance instruments. Under this governance model, governments from all over the world have encouraged decentralisation, school choice, and school autonomy to diversify the educational offer and adapt it to changing societal needs (Maroy, 2009). As a counterpart, educational providers are increasingly subject to administrative and market forms of accountability. Schools are expected to reach minimum performance standards and become more responsive to families' demands, with the latter empowered by their enlarged school-choice capacity and access to schools' performance data (West et al., 2011). Under this governance approach "the aggregate consumer choices provide the discipline of accountability and demand, that the producer cannot escape" (Gewirtz et al., 1995, p. 1). This process is expected to activate competitive dynamics among schools with the ultimate objective of making schools more effective (Ball, 1993).

This policy model is intended to simultaneously boost schools' performance and educational diversification. Despite the fact that this model emerged in so-called New Public Management (NPM) early-adopter countries such as the US or the UK, it is currently being enacted in countries ascribed to very different public administration traditions (Sahlberg, 2016).

However, to deal with market competition and accountability dynamics, schools do not always innovate or implement improvement measures in instruction or pedagogy. Very often, schools

adopt superficial changes related to their image under the logics of marketing and promotion, which rely more on symbolic and emotional appeals than on substantive innovations (Lubienski, 2007). Overall, schools' responses to external pressures are not homogenous, but tend to be contingent on their market position and external reputation (Jabbar, 2016; Zancajo, 2020). To better capture how education policy operates in multi-layered educational systems, an emerging corpus of research has started focusing on both the strategic responses and the logics of action deployed by schools in the context of changing regulations. The concept of logics of action, understood as the "predominant orientations given to the conduct of a school in different spheres of action" (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009, p. 72), captures the informal, implicit and not necessarily strategic nature of schools' reactions to the regulatory and market pressures they face.

The Madrid urban area (Spain) is a unique scenario in which to analyse schools' responses and emerging logics of action in a context characterized by intensifying market and administrative accountability pressures. In Spain, the public administration tradition is strongly bureaucratic. In the education sector, this translates into de facto high levels of professional autonomy in schools, and weak accountability measures that are more input-oriented rather than output- or performance-oriented. Nonetheless, in Madrid, the nature of autonomy has been challenged and tensioned by the regional government's recent adoption of regulatory governance instruments such as performance-based accountability, school browsers and the amplification of school-choice freedom (Authors, 2020). The fact that these instruments are recent and have generated an important public debate within the educational field contributes to making the underlying mechanisms behind schools' responses more explicit.

The objective of this paper is three-fold. First, we aim to identify the diverse factors explaining the schools' position in the local education market. Second, we uncover the predominant logics of action that schools articulate in response to both the most immediate competitive pressures they face, and their position in the marketplace. Third, we pinpoint the main tensions that emerge when schools need to negotiate between what they experience as inconsistent and often

contradictory sources of pressure. To address these interrelated objectives, the paper presents a case study conducted in the metropolitan area of Madrid, based on qualitative interviews and survey responses, and through the construction of an innovative index to position schools in the hierarchy of local education markets.

The structure of the paper is as follows. We start with the presentation of the analytical approach of the research, the policy context of the study, and the methodological strategy. Next, the results are presented and discussed according to the different intervening factors behind the main logics of action, the distinctive responses of each logic, and the tensions involved. The paper closes with a discussion of the main results and provides some conclusions.

Analytical Framework: Post-bureaucratic Governance and Schools Logics of Action

The introduction of post-bureaucratic governance instruments in education has altered the roles, functions, and expectations of school actors, as well as the forms of competitive pressure these actors face. In this section, we discuss the notion of post-bureaucratic governance as an analytical concept that captures the transformations that the regulation of school systems has faced in different contexts in recent decades. We then introduce the notion of schools' logics of action as both an analytical and empirical device to study schools' reactivity to the pro-market policies and new evaluative regimes that are being established within the post-bureaucratic approach.

Post-bureaucratic Governance: An Emerging Regulatory Model in the Educational Sector

For decades now, academic and policy debates have analysed and discussed the pros and cons of the tenets of managerialism as guiding principles for public administration reforms (Hood, 1991). Emulating private sector style management, the so-called NPM has aimed to improve public bureaucracies' quality standards and efficiency by promoting "catalytic" forms of government that should focus more on "steering" at a distance rather than on directly "rowing" public services (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993).

In the education sector, the notion of post-bureaucratic governance captures the recent changes occurring in numerous school systems across the globe. To explain such transformations, Maroy (2012) contrasts the emerging post-bureaucratic governance to a more professional-bureaucratic approach to governance. In professional-bureaucratic systems, education is regulated with common rules and procedures based on organizational rationality, predictability and universality; at the same time, schools and teachers enjoy a great deal of educational autonomy and keep important control over their work. Deviating from this approach, post-bureaucratic governance promotes more managerial than pedagogic forms of autonomy, and at the same time conceives of schools as independent managerial units whose behaviour can be regulated through external forms of accountability, standardised data and parental-choice pressure (Maroy, 2009; Maroy, 2012).

Post-bureaucratic governance favours the diversification of school provision and the introduction of market logics into school systems. Nonetheless, in educational quasi-markets, instead of price, quality becomes the main regulatory mechanism. In fact, one of the main challenges of the application of post-bureaucratic logics to educational governance is the problem of objectifying educational quality. Despite the fact that the quality of educational providers is at the centre of the programme ontology of school choice and performance-based accountability, educational quality appears to be "uncertain", "opaque", "plural" and "heterogeneous" (Felouzis & Perroton, 2007).

Parental school choice is not always oriented towards substantive considerations about instruction or pedagogy. In education quasi-markets "the quality of the service provided (…) appears strongly linked to the presence of desirable or undesirable *others*" (van Zanten, 2003, p. 109). Indeed, families tend to choose schools according to a variety of factors, strongly influenced by social class dispositions, preferences and cultures (Ball, 1993; Ball et al., 1996; Bell, 2008; Bonal, Verger, & Zancajo, 2017). Hence, school choice should be analysed as a class strategy that may generate dynamics of social closure and class reproduction, indicating that the student population of schools often appears to be a sign of external reputation

(Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Ball, 2003; Gewirtz et al., 1995). When more freedom of school choice is guaranteed, it is mostly middle- and upper-class families that benefit (OECD, 2019), not only because these families are better able to navigate the system, but also because they are more appealing to the better positioned schools.

Indeed, within the described policy environment, schools are increasingly involved in competitive dynamics to maintain the school enrolment and, in many cases, to reach a certain student population profile (van Zanten, 2009; Gewirtz, 1995). Dynamics of school competition emerge in local spaces which can be referred to as "local competitive arenas" (Woods et al., 2005), "local education markets" (Lubienski, 2005; 2009) or "lived markets" (Taylor, 2001). These dynamics are as important (or possibly more important) than formal state regulations in regulating school actors' behaviour. Whilst local education markets are structured hierarchically and vertically, the dynamics of school competition often take place horizontally, i.e., among schools that share a similar market segment (Taylor, 2001). In the next section we show that school responses to both the regulatory and local market environment tend to be contingent on the position that schools occupy in market hierarchies.

Schools' Reactivity to Competitive Pressures: On the Concept of Logics of Action

As a reaction to intensifying local competitive dynamics, schools develop a variegated repertoire of logics of action. Logics of action are understood as ex post facto reconstructions that consider a broad set of practices, activities and routines through which schools address competitive interdependences in quasi-market environments (Maroy & van Zanten, 2009). Such practices operate in both the pedagogical and organizational domains, and tend to be aimed at attracting and retaining a certain profile of students in order to improve or maintain the school's relative market position. These practices might be proactive, but they may also follow a survival rationale. Logics of action should be distinguished from strategies in the sense that they do not necessarily follow a systematic implementation pattern, nor a conscious choice of practices, nor awareness of their impact (Ball & Maroy, 2009; van Zanten, 2009).

The notion of logics of action draws from Weberian organizational theory according to which organizational logics are understood as the implicit relationship between goals and means assumed by actors that take part in organisations (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993). From this perspective, the concept of logics of action aims to capture certain regularities, practices and routines involved in how schools respond to market and administrative pressures. Internal school characteristics and micro political processes at the school level are involved in the way the school responds to external pressures (Ball, 2012). However, what the concept of logics of action highlights is the contingent and relational nature of school responses. One implication is that the logics of action that emerge in one particular context might not emerge in another. A second implication is that that the logics that schools articulate in the face of competition is strongly influenced by how other schools react to the same competitive environment (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Jabbar, 2015; Moschetti, 2019; Zancajo, 2020).

According to existing research, variation in schools' logics of action depends on two main contingencies: first, on the level of openness and stability of the immediate educational market; second, on the positions educational providers occupy in the education market hierarchy. On the basis of these variables, Maroy and van Zanten (2009) and van Zanten (2009), propose a classification according to which schools might adopt entrepreneurial, monopolistic, tactician or adaptive logics of action. Schools with entrepreneurial logics are those that maintain a good image and reputation, but in the face of an open and unstable market, deploy a set of practices aimed at attracting and retaining middle-class students as a mechanism for distinction. In contrast, schools with monopolistic orientations take advantage of their dominant position and aspire to retain their status, often with academic and traditional educational approaches. For their part, schools with tactician logics are those with an intermediate or low reputation who face unstable market dynamics by diversifying their student body and attracting middle-class students through tactical and symbolic changes. Finally, adaptive schools are those with a lower reputation and attractiveness who accept their position and adopt organizational and

pedagogical changes to adapt the school approach to the profile of the students they serve (van Zanten, 2009; Maroy & van Zanten, 2009).

This classification is quite comprehensive and has been constructed and tested in European educational settings through qualitative research. Other studies and classifications of schools' logics of action that follow a similar rationale and research strategy have been applied to other contexts as well (see for instance Moschetti (2019), Gurova and Camphuijsen (2020), Termes et al. (2020) and Zancajo (2020)). Our study builds on previous research by characterizing the schools' position in the educational market (and specific school practices) through quantitative indicators, and by following retroductive inferential reasoning grounded on mixed-methods triangulation.

Context Case and Methodological Strategy

Madrid is a unique context in which to study the school logics of action in the face of market and administrative pressures. In a short period of time and through a cumulative educational reform process, it has attempted to move from a bureaucratic governance approach towards a post-bureaucratic-oriented governance model through the adoption of new policy instruments. First, an external and standardised test was implemented in 2005, and the results of this evaluation were posted publicly in different formats. Since 2015, the test results are no longer publicly disseminated even though competitive pressures associated with test performance remain through more informal channels (Authors, 2020). Second, so-called "school autonomy" programmes were enacted in order to specialize schools in different fields, such as sports, technology or foreign languages and diversify the educational offer accordingly. Third, a gradual reform process of increasing parental school choice culminated in 2013 with the establishment of an open enrolment policy across the whole region. In fact, the regional Education Department boasts of being "the Spanish region with greater school choice" and stressed that according to PISA data, "85% of the Madrilenian schools compete with two or

more schools in their environment"[59]. The combination of these three main reform strands contributed to increasing external school pressures and dynamics of school competition (Prieto & Villamor, 2012).

Another important feature of the Madrilenian educational system is the presence of both independent and dependent private schools; the majority of students attends public schools (54.2 %), followed by publicly funded private schools, (29,9 %), most of them managed by religious institutions, and private schools (15.9 %) (Consejería de Educación, 2019). Moreover, Madrid reports very high levels of school segregation and has one of the highest values across different school segregation indexes in Spain, and in Europe (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018; Murillo & Martinez-Garrido, 2018).

This policy context represents an extraordinary scenario in which to study the emerging tensions that schools face when addressing competitive pressures in a post-bureaucratic school system. By exploring such tensions, we can better understand the nuanced and hybridised nature of schools' logics of action under quasi-market environments.

To study the school responses to competitive pressure, we adopt a methodological strategy that combines qualitative interviews with teachers, principals and school leaders, with survey responses and descriptive analyses of school practices. The article relies on a case-study approach of a qualitative nature, triangulating semi-structured interviews with descriptive quantitative data. Data triangulation is used as the main source of retroductive thinking (cf. Downward & Mearman, 2007), which, following the tradition of critical realism, aims to identify the mechanisms and the necessary conditions for a phenomenon to exist. From the point of view of critical realism, methodological pluralism is needed to analyse social processes and structures that are not necessarily visible in the empirical domain (Danermark et al., 1997).

[59]http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadervalue1=filename%3D101203+CONCLUSIONES+INFORME+PISA+2009.pdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1271819634741&ssbinary=true

We combine quantitative data from an original survey administered to principals (n=179) and teachers (n=844) from 91 Spanish schools, sampled in the regions of Madrid and Catalonia, with semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted in a sub-sample of schools in Madrid. The questionnaire was conducted in order to characterize and explore different school practices, pedagogical and instructional approaches, as well as to reveal elements regarding the school context (see Levatino (2021)). The qualitative data rely on a set of semi-structured interviews with principals (n=26) and teachers (n=24) in a sample of 12 schools with diverging market positions and school providers selected from among those who answered the survey.

Questionnaire data administered to principals and teachers, combined with secondary data from administrative sources, have also been key in the construction of an index of the position that schools occupy in their local education market (LEM). An exploratory factor analysis has enabled us to explore the underlying structure of a set of variables: sources of performative pressure perceived by school actors (external and internal), the level of performance, the perceived reputation of the school, the ratio between demand and available places. The exploration of the communalities among items has enabled us to identify a significant linear combination and extract a factor from three variables: the perceived reputation of the school, the ratio between available places and applications, and the average school performance.

As a robustness test to approach triangulation with qualitative analysis, we have compared the position of the sampled schools derived from this index with a classification we made by combining primary data from fieldwork observations and interviews, with secondary administrative data (see Table 1). The schools' positions in both classifications are consistent, especially in the case of schools at the extremes of the index. The schools whose position varies slightly are those located at intermediate positions, in a range where it is more difficult to discriminate.

Table 1. Position in the Local Education Market

	LEM position (primary and secondary data)	LEM position (primary data from a survey)	
School	**4 categories**	**LEM index**	**4 categories**
B3	High	1,9	High
B2	High	1,5	High
A1	Mid-high	1,2	High
C1	Mid-high	1,1	High
B1	Mid-high	1,1	High
B4	High	0,9	High
A6	Mid-low	0,3	Mid-high
A2	Mid-high	0,1	Mid-high
A3	Low	-0,1	Mid-low
A5	Mid-low	-0,3	Mid-low
A4	Low	-1,4	Low
A7	Low	-2,0	Low

Source: Authors

Results: How Schools Face Competitive Pressure

The results of the research are presented in three main sub-sections. First, we address the diverse underlying factors explaining the schools' position in the local education market, a decisive component defining schools' logics of action. Second, we characterize the schools analysed according to different types of logics of action and delve into how schools with different orientations address competitive pressures in their reference local education spaces. Third, we reflect on the tensions that schools experience in articulating responses to competitive pressure.

Characterising School Position in the LEM According to Key Intervening Factors

The position in the LEM can be defined by multiple factors, both endogenous and exogenous, structural and relational. Factors such as the composition of the student population (social composition, performance), the type and space of perceived school competition, school demand,

parental mobility, etc. These factors determine the position of schools in the market, interacting with parents' school choice preferences.

School Composition

The student population of a school, both in terms of social origin and average student performance, has a decisive influence on the position that schools occupy in the local education market hierarchy.

The three schools that show the highest level of performance (B1, C1 and B2) are those with the most privileged composition, while the schools with the lowest average performance (A4, A5, A6 and A7) have a social composition between medium and low. Hence, the social position of families appears to be decisive in terms of school performance. High performing schools describe their families as "interested, very supportive and with high cultural levels" (C1), mostly "coming from liberal professions" (B2) and with "high academic expectations" (B1). In contrast, low performing schools are described by principals as "complex schools" dealing with students carrying "baggage from deprived environments and difficult familiar situations" (A7).

Regulatory Framework: Enrolment Policy and School Choice

Two variables are used to characterize the sampled schools in relation to the regulatory framework of school choice: the origin of the enrolled students and the location of the schools that compete for the same student body. The origin of the students is expressed as the percentage of students who live in the school's neighbourhood, district or municipality. This variable provides us with information on the geographical space of school competition, although it should be borne in mind that strategic school choice processes are not necessarily associated with attending schools outside the neighbourhood of residence.

The origin of the students enrolled in the school offers us a reliable - albeit partial - indicator of the strategic use of school choice, especially when the origin of the students is outside the district. This variable is partially correlated with the position in the local educational market

(see table in appendix 1). Schools with a high LEM position tend to have a higher proportion of students from outside the neighbourhood or district in which the school is located.

Schools B4 (46.3%), C1 (30%) and A1 (12.7%) have a higher percentage of students who are from the municipality, beyond the neighbourhood and district where the school is located, and have a LEM index above the average. Other schools do not correspond to this pattern, since school choice also depends on the social composition of the school location or on the quality of schools that are close to home. Schools such as B2, B1 or B3 have a high LEM position and most of the students come from the same neighbourhood as the school. Nonetheless, schools with a low position in the LEM invariably enrol students from the school neighbourhood and district (A4 and A7).

According to principals in more vulnerable schools, families choose schools based on the criterion of proximity. This is understood as a passive rather than strategic attitude regarding school choice:

> [The open enrolment policy] is fine for some families because they can choose, or they can try to choose, but this is not the case in this school. I think they just choose this school for proximity. (A7_P1)

In addition, our interviews show that there are schools at the bottom of the LEM with the ability to attract students beyond the neighbourhood and from more distant areas of the district because they offer specific programmes for special needs students (A3). In contrast, some schools with high LEM positions actively encourage the enrolment of students from a broader geographic area by, for instance, resorting to private bus services (B4, C1). Principals in these schools describe themselves as "not a neighbourhood school" enrolling students "coming from everywhere" and attracting families who "choose the school project" (C1_P1).

Nevertheless, under certain conditions, schools in the higher positions of the LEM can also enrol students from a more restricted area. This is, for instance, the case of B1, which is located in a traditional upper-class district, described as "very conservative" and the "par excellence Madrilenian bourgeoisie neighbourhood". In the context of an old upper-class neighbourhood,

this school tended to enrol students from a specific area, involving salient dynamics of social reproduction:

> Almost everyone belongs to this neighbourhood, they come to the same schools they studied, and we have a lot of former students among parents, lots of them, they remain in the neighbourhood where they were grown, which is an upper-class neighbourhood. (B1_P1)

Perceived School Competition

School competition can be approached both as an exogenous factor, understood as the *number of schools competing* for the same student body, or as an endogenous factor, understood as *perceived competition*.

The relationship between perceived competition and school position in the LEM is not linear. There is no correlation between the number of competing schools and the LEM index, since some schools at the extremes of the LEM index, do not (for various reasons) perceive competition. According to interviews conducted in poorly positioned schools, a bad social reputation places some schools in a stigmatized position, which hinders them in deploying a strategy to deal with school competition and instead triggers a resigned attitude:

> *We are becoming a ghetto school*, parents in this school come here happy, but in general we don't have a good reputation. Our image is that we are a school mostly enrolling an immigrant population, Romani families (…) and then *this is our image*... (A4_P1)

This school assumes, with a certain resignation, that their internal student composition is an obstacle to improving their external image and competitiveness. This has been described in previous research (cf. Maroy & van Zanten, 2009). In some cases, a school may embrace a certain compliant attitude regarding the possibility of improving student learning, and focus instead on improving the school climate:

> My goal is avoiding troubles and problems among students, improving coexistence and ensuring teachers feel comfortable at the school. (…) Here it is very difficult to obtain good educational results; we are content with reading and writing. (A7_P1)

At the other extreme of the LEM hierarchy, we find schools that recognize that the environment is competitive, but do not feel threatened or excessively pressured by this because of their privileged position:

> This is an environment in which there are many schools with the same style… You may experience this as a threat, but, honestly, we don't. I mean, I think there are different parents, different children, and different educational styles that fit each other. It is true that I say this because the school has no problems - maybe, if I had problems, I would be dead - but it is true that we do not have such problems. (B2_P1)

Regarding the *spaces of school competition* (see table in appendix 1), some of the schools with a high LEM index have competitors beyond their neighbourhood and/or district (B3, C1 and B4), while schools with a low LEM index have their competitors in the closest area (A4 and A7). However, the relationship between LEM position and the *spaces of school competition* is not linear either. The existence of hubs of highly prestigious schools in some neighbourhoods means that well-positioned schools have most of their competing schools close by (B2, A1 and B1). School B1 exemplifies how the competition they experience is intrinsically related to market, demographic and space dynamics in their closest area:

> There are many schools in this area, that, in the next 6, 7, 10 years won't exist because there is not sufficient demand. So, there is a very competitive struggle between schools, very close to each other, with a very small market share, and this is why there is eagerness for pedagogic innovation, client care and personalized attention". (B1_P3)

External Reputation and School Demand – Choice Preferences

The two exogenous factors of a relational-ideational nature that have been included in the construction of the LEM index are the perceived external reputation and the school demand. The external reputation refers to the perception of the reputation of the school in the local community by school actors (teachers and principals), while the school demand is proxied with the ratio between available places and applications that schools receive (see table in appendix 1).

The school demand variable does not discriminate very much in the case of the schools in the Madrid sub-sample. Most schools state that they have more or many more applications than places. Indeed, school demand is not only influenced by the parental choice preferences, but also by the relationship between the number of schools and the demographic pressure in the area.

However, it is worth noting that the perceived reputation positively predicts - albeit partly - the level of school demand in the full sample. Every school that reports many more applications than available places has a reputation level above the average (see table in appendix). At the other extreme, schools that have a medium or below-average reputation describe having a few more applications than places, or more places than applications.

Parents Exerting Pressure

A useful variable to approach competitive school pressure is the pressure exerted by families to obtain high results in external evaluations, as perceived by teachers and principals. In general, high values in perceived performative pressure correspond to privileged positions in the LEM. Table 1.2 in the appendix shows schools with a low position that do not perceive performance pressures as they have abandoned any competitive ambition in this area due to their social composition and external image (A4 and A7):

> I don't feel any pressure for the results, nor do the families, because of the environment we have… Families do not care about ordinary evaluations, I have a lot of academic records here that parents have not come to pick up yet…So, imagine, I don't think an external test coming from outside is something important for families, and this is not a determining factor for them in terms of school choice. (A7_P2)

In contrast, other schools better positioned in the local hierarchy report much higher levels of parental pressure and interest in school performance (A1, B2, B1, A2 and A6). In these schools "families ask about the results in the open day events" (A1_P1) and are very "interested in the level of [school] performance" (B1_P1). In this context, school actors tend to use the test results as a strategy to build their reputation (B3, A1 and A6).

However, this does not necessarily equate to high levels of performance pressure. There are schools that, thanks to their privileged monopolistic position, do not feel pressure for results and are not involved in competitive dynamics in the domain of academic performance (C1).

Logics of Action, Market Position and Interdependent Competition

When facing competitive pressures of both a market and an administrative nature, schools tend to define and adjust their responses to competition according to internal characteristics and the

external environment. Nonetheless, beyond such a general appreciation, the schools' logics of action are also contingent on the position that schools occupy in their local education market of reference.

In this section, on the basis of classification by van Zanten (2009) and Maroy and van Zanten (2009), we present the main logics of action identified in Madrid and reflect on how these logics are, to a great extent, linked to market positioning. We begin by providing an overview of the relationship between the market position of the sampled schools and the action logics that have been identified in the qualitative fieldwork. Next, we go into the detail of the practices and routines that, within the framework of the action logics, are conditioned by the market position.

Logics of Action and the Market Position

The classification of the schools based on their theoretically identified action logic clearly shows a pattern, following the schools' ranking as derived from the LEM index (Table 2). The sampled schools, according to their logics of action, appear homogeneously distributed throughout the position index. At the lower end of the hierarchy, we see the schools that the fieldwork has positioned as *adaptive* schools, which are all public. In the intermediate positions there are the so-called *tactician* schools, which are also all public but with a higher market position. In contrast, at the higher end of the hierarchy, we find both the so-called *entrepreneurial* schools and those of a monopolistic nature. All the schools here except one are private.

Table 2. Position in the Local Education Market

	LEM position		Logics of action that sampled schools are likely to adhere
School	**LEM index**	**4 categories**	
B3	1,9	High	*Entrepreneurial*
B2	1,5	High	*Entrepreneurial*
A1	1,2	High	*Entrepreneurial*
C1	1,1	High	*Monopolistic*
B1	1,1	High	*Entrepreneurial*
B4	0,9	High	*Entrepreneurial*
A6	0,3	Mid-high	*Tactician*
A2	0,1	Mid-high	*Tactician*
A3	-0,1	Mid-low	*Adaptive*
A5	-0,3	Mid-low	*Adaptive*
A4	-1,4	Low	*Adaptive*
A7	-2,0	Low	*Adaptive*

Source: Authors

Adaptive Logics of Action: Struggling with no Expected Improvements

Schools with the lowest market positions are those that are more likely to adopt adaptive logics of action. Schools with such logics accept their disadvantaged position, which is seen as structurally determined, and to a great extent withdraw from school competition. Adaptive schools often have a very low academic orientation. They do not give credit to the testing and accountability system for measuring school quality, nor do they agree with the publication and comparison of school results, e.g., A4, A3 and A7 schools (see Table 3). Accordingly, tested learning standards are not a priority in their teaching strategy, and more importance is given to improving social cohesion, deepening a value-oriented educational approach and improving the school climate:

> For me the results of the external test are not important at all, I think they are not measuring anything truly important (…) I don't care excessively about it, I am much more concerned about students learning some relevant values in the school. (A3_P1)

Table 3. Attitudes and beliefs toward PBA

	Overall		LEM position
Schools	**Index**	**Position**	
B1	1,18	Positive	High
B4	0,72	Positive	High
A1	0,07	Mid	High
B2	1,27	Positive	High
A5	0,59	Positive	Mid-low
A6	0,14	Mid	Mid-high
A2	-0,54	Mid	Mid-high
A7	0,24	Mid	Low
B3	0,11	Mid	High
A4	-1,12	Negative	Low
A3	-0,87	Negative	Mid-low
C1	-0,92	Negative	High

Source: Authors

Another priority of these schools consists of meeting the socio-affective needs of students, especially those with strong deficits at home:

> I think that in order to improve learning outcomes we first have to improve school living together; it is very difficult to manage a classroom and the standardized tests if it is impossible to give a lesson. (A7_P1)

Most active schools may turn to innovation processes in search of methods that can help students improve their learning, although without expectations of changing the school composition or making structural educational improvements (A4_P1). For example, they may foster specific thematic and methodological programmes as a strategy to promote meaningful education and student engagement.

Adaptation appears to be a more expressive than instrumental logic, as action is driven by axiological motivations of remedial education. Changes at the pedagogical level are translated into inclusive educational practices, where measures of compensation prevail. Aware of their disadvantaged position in the marketplace, these schools prefer to adjust the school practices

according to their student population needs and interests, adapt the schoolwork of the students with the greatest learning difficulties, as well as modify teaching materials and instructional strategies (see also Table 9):

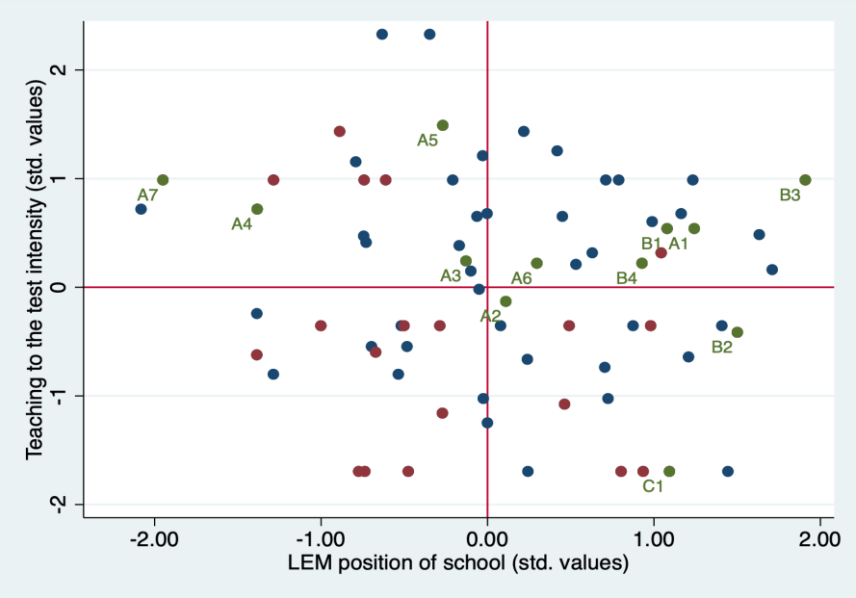
> We are trying to work in a lighter way, with another textbook publisher, with different materials, with a more manipulative approach… We are trying to do other kinds of things, not only working with books and exercises. So, we are being involved in a different dynamic, trying to change, because we are aware that our students do not receive enough support outside the school. (A4_P1)

By following this logic, some schools reach a certain level of inclusive specialization and take market advantage of such conditions (A5). In other cases, schools report being labelled as the "inclusive school" in the neighbourhood, enrolling the de facto excluded students from other schools with a more academic orientation (A3). However, schools are also aware of the dynamics of social exclusion that mean they are doomed to specialize in a lower market segment:

> Families are removing students with difficulties from bilingual schools, then if you have a reputation for being an inclusive school, you can have a serious problem because of enrolling too many students with learning difficulties. (A3_P1)

Although adaptive schools do not make standardized tests a priority, they may adopt test preparation actions following an inclusive rationale (Figure 1). Unlike the better positioned schools in the market, which carry out teaching-to-the-test actions to further improve their good image and external reputation (B3 and A1), schools with lower positions and adaptive logics of action (A7, A4, A5 and A3) often conceive teaching-to-the-test as "a way to familiarize students with the test and limit student stress and frustration" (A4_T3).

Figure 1. Teaching to the test practices and LEM position



Source: Authors

In addition, and motivated by remedial education approaches, adaptive schools are likely to use internal segmentation mechanisms to address their disadvantaged composition, (predominantly pupils with migrant backgrounds). These schools would therefore be more inclined to organize flexible grouping, reinforcement groups or divisions of groups in order to cope with learning difficulties of students (see schools A4 and A7 in Table 4).

Table 4. Internal differentiation

Schools	Internal differentiation		Ability grouping		Adapted to students with learning difficulties		Adapted to advanced students		LEM position
	Index	**3 categories**	**Index**	**3 categories**	**Index**	**3 categories**	**Index**	**3 categories**	
A4	1,50	High	0,40	High	1,73	High	0,56	High	Low
A7	1,04	High	1,16	High	0,73	High	0,35	Med	Low
A5	1,54	High	1,09	High	0,93	High	1,37	High	Mid-low
A3	0,57	High	-0,06	Med	1,38	High	-0,51	Low	Mid-low
A2	0,66	High	0,66	High	0,26	Med	0,63	High	Mid-high
A6	0,26	Med	0,02	Med	0,18	Med	-0,08	Med	Mid-high
B3	0,06	Med	0,78	High	-0,35	Low	-0,27	Med	High
A1	0,06	Med	0,51	High	0,08	Med	-0,04	Med	High
B2	-0,23	Med	0,18	Med	-0,11	Med	-0,29	Med	High
C1	-0,47	Med	0,05	Med	-0,64	Low	-0,38	Med	High
B4	-0,96	Low	-0,03	Med	-0,95	Low	-0,64	Low	High
B1	-1,07	Low	-0,30	Med	-1,30	Low	-0,51	Low	High

Source: Authors

Adaptive schools do not focus on competing with other schools but try to better align school practices with student needs. In fact, even if “open doors” is the most common strategy to publicize the school, the worst-positioned schools in the local market in our sample are the ones that pay less attention to such a marketing strategy, together with the school with monopolistic logics, although for different reasons (Table 5). These schools do not give much importance to other activities to disseminate the activities of the school, such as ad hoc visits arranged with families. They face promotional actions with resignation, assuming that their student composition “will remain the same” because the stigmatization they suffer limits and “makes it very difficult” (A4_P1) to attract students from other social backgrounds.

Table 5. Promotional and marketing activities

Schools	Open days		Web and social networks		Ad-hoc visits		LEM position
	Index	**4 categories**	**Index**	**4 categories**	**Index**	**4 categories**	
B2	0,31	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high	High
B4	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	0,67	Med-high	High
B1	0,31	Med-low	0,02	Med-low	0,91	Med-high	High
A1	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	-1,50	Low	High
B2	0,31	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high	High
C1	-1,83	Low	0,89	Med-high	0,91	Med-high	High
A2	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,43	Med-low	Mid-high
A6	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	-1,98	Low	Mid-high
A3	0,58	Med-low	0,89	Med-high	0,43	Med-low	Mid-low
A5	0,58	Med-low	0,24	Med-low	0,91	Med-high	Mid-low
A7	-0,22	Low	0,89	Med-high	-0,53	Low	Low
A4	-0,22	Low	-1,07	Low	-1,01	Low	Low

Source: Authors

Some of these schools also renounce adopting other strategies of external differentiation of their educational offer and embrace conformist attitudes regarding their student composition and intake, “we are in this neighbourhood and this is what we have”. (A7_P1)

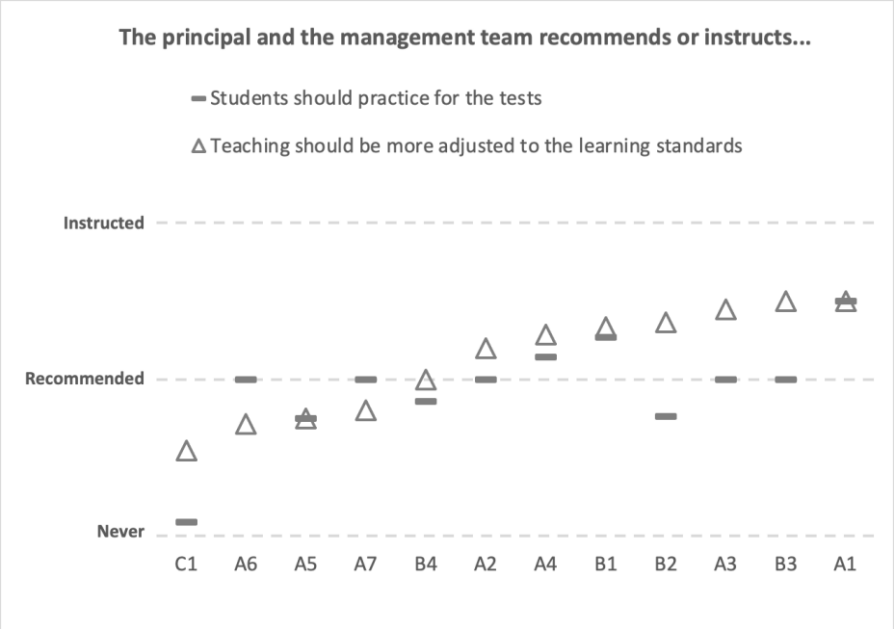
Entrepreneurial Logics of Action: Competing to Reinforce the Privileged Position

The schools with entrepreneurial action logics are those that, although enjoying a good position in the local hierarchy, perceive high levels of competition and carry out actions of distinction to attract certain family profiles. These schools are defined by some teachers as “great companies and marketing projects” (B1_T2) as they are very active in developing competitive practices, and are the ones more likely to adopt instrumental actions to further improve their market position of privilege. They need to instrumentally respond to families’ preferences and expectations in a context of open competition with other schools:

> We are all in a complex dynamic, in which families have become clients and they have changed their role. Currently, parents come here with a demanding attitude, because if you don’t give me what I want, I can change to the school in front of. (B1_T2)

The entrepreneurial schools are those that tend to develop more direct strategies to meet the accountability goals. They use test preparation activities and align teaching to the external evaluation. Virtually all schools in the sample with such logics acknowledge having intensively prepared students to face standardized tests and achieve better results (B1, B4, B3 and A1) (Figure 2). This practice of alignment with external testing is actively encouraged by the management team. As seen in Figure 2, teachers in these schools report having received instructions, or recommendations to both adjust teaching to evaluable learning standards and make students practise for the tests (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Actions to meet accountability goals: alignment and teaching to the test



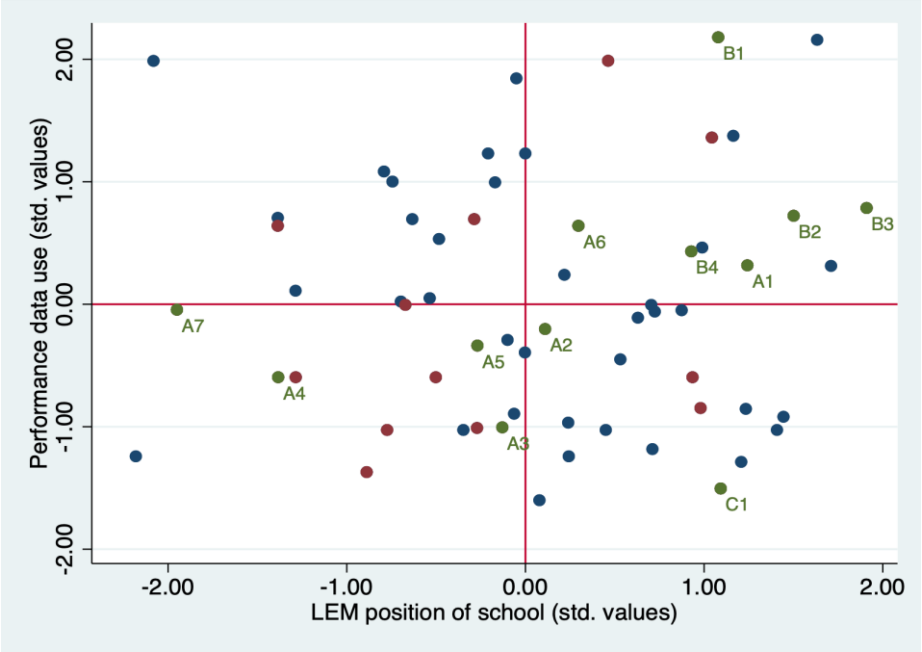
Source: Authors

This is especially true of A1, the school that more broadly considers that students should practise the test and that teaching should be more adjusted to learning standards. In this case, the concerns for the school image and the pressure of competition associated with school performance appear to be a direct factor involving test preparation activities:

> Yes, the classroom dynamics changes a bit because I want the students to know what kind of tests they will face. We are looking for good results; I'm not going to say the contrary. We want good results because that says a lot about us as a school. (A1_T3)

Schools with such a competitive approach, especially privately-run entrepreneurial schools, develop greater efforts to improve their image in the marketplace. For example, these schools make the most use of standardized test data both to compare themselves with other potentially competing schools and to increase their already good reputation. As seen in Figure 3, all schools do this, even those holding the best positions in the educational market, combining a high level of aggregate performance, good social reputation and an over-demand for places.

Figure 3. Level of performance data use and LEM position



Source: Authors

Finally, the competitive nature of these schools leads them to deploy a series of practices to publicize the school and attract a profile of families to further reinforce their privileged position. Among other promotional activities, these schools also encourage ad hoc visits to familiarize families with the activities of the school. As seen in Table 4, almost all of these schools are above average in organizing "open doors" and in using their website and social media to offer visits for families.

As for school marketing actions, these schools are the ones carrying out the most sophisticated and specialized promotional strategies, for example, relying on "marketing teams" in charge of the website, the school publicity, and the communication strategy (B1 and B2). They use

banners, flyers, and targeted advertising campaigns. In our fieldwork, the schools that engaged in more complex strategies of promotion are publicly funded private schools that are part of broader foundations and congregations, which require them to develop marketing plans:

> Q: And do you advertise the school in any way?
>
> R: Yes we do, at any time. Last year we used a billboard, we are continuously in the social networks, anything we do we upload it; there are advertising campaigns for the open days, and we perform targeted campaigns, so we have a marketing service for that. We look for a lot of resources to upload and we are always thinking about what people want. (B2_P1)

Schools with entrepreneurial logics of action are also very aware of the importance of distinguishing the school with their educational offer and deploying strategies of differentiation. This may involve different instructional and educational programmes, and also other non-curricular activities and complementary services:

> [To deal with school competition] We are offering services lacking in other schools. We have opened an artistic baccalaureate, a high school of music, which is unique in the city… so this is a particular educational offer. Second, we have broadened the schedule of different non-curricular activities; this is what parents demand, (…) so you need to offer an extended schedule, with more possibilities. Thirdly, we offer more personalized attention, more orientation, a nursing service, etc. (B1_P3)

Entrepreneurial schools are those that are more able to use their margins of autonomy to develop strategies to improve their image and market position by means of participating in different school projects adopted to attract and retain student enrolment and build a particular external image:

> We are being involved in all these schools' projects, because we are aware of what school autonomy means… Which is a bit more of competition, let's say, developing certain aspects allowing us to attract more students. (A1_T3)

Tactician Logics of Action: Adopting Strategies to Improve the Precarious Market Position

Schools with a medium or low reputation, but that actively engage in and perceive market competition, tend to adopt tactician logics of action to attract and retain middle-class students. They usually present a heterogeneous student body, but are very aware of their precarious position in the market hierarchy. To avoid becoming highly-segregated schools, they consider that they need to find some balance attending students with diverse learning levels in order to

"maintain a very heterogeneous population" and prevent middle-class families "abandoning the school for other institutions" thereby making them a "ghetto school" (A6_P1).

Tactician schools may carry out several strategies to be more attractive to certain profiles of families. Schools may tactically adopt some pedagogical innovations, which are supposed to be more appealing to a certain profile of families that "choose the school because of a more active dynamic and updated methodology". These schools see innovation as a strategy to compete and ensure that families perceive the school as "giving the same opportunities as other schools in the district" (A2_P2).

They may also implement internal differentiation strategies, i.e., tracking and ability grouping practices, to simultaneously accommodate more fluent students and pupils with more disadvantaged social backgrounds. As reported in previous research, practices of instructional segmentation are outstanding strategies to deal at the same time with middle-class parents' expectations and disadvantaged students' needs (van Zanten, 2009).

In both fieldwork and survey data, we found these instructional targeting practices in schools with a more diverse student population (A6 and A2 schools). Unlike adaptive schools, which show high levels of differentiation of a compensatory nature, we see that tactical schools are characterized by applying internal segmentation mechanisms with an intensity between medium and high (Table 4). These mechanisms are applied in order to adapt to different student profiles and respond to their diverging needs, and respond to the expressed need to establish non-permanent two-speed groups:

> We provide some specific support, especially for non-readers, those students coming from ethnic minorities, migrant backgrounds, or those with a late entry in the education system. This diversity in the classrooms slows us down a lot, so we do this support. We also do the opposite, there is a teacher who takes the best students for advanced classes and the tutor stays with those who are in the normal level, with the rest of the group. (A6_P2)

Tactician schools tend to enact the external test with an instrumental logic. As seen in Table 3, these schools show an inconsistent adherence to the accountability system and they do not

intrinsically believe in the test as a useful educational device (A2 and A6). However, they are aware of the importance of the external test performance in market terms:

> For me the test has very little importance, but I am aware that families come to the open day events to enrol their 3-year-old children, and they already ask for the results in sixth grade, so imagine… (A2_P1)

As a result of this, these schools are likely to carry out, with a moderate intensity, actions to prepare students for the tests (Figure 1: A2 and A6). Having students practise for the tests seems to be a strategy generally recommended by the management team (Figure 2: A2 and A6). Principals could consider such practices as an effective strategy to avoid the "risk that outstanding students do not know the mechanics of the test" (A6_P1) which would result in a poor performance for the entire school.

Moreover, these schools may develop forms of external differentiation as a result of competitive pressures. For instance, some schools use the Spanish-English Bilingual Programme as a "tactic and a marketing issue" strategically adopted to "deal with [enrolment] difficulties" and a way to offer "something different" (A2_T1) in order to face external pressure and improve their market position in the local hierarchy.

Monopolistic Logics of Action: No Stress to Maintain the Privileged Position

Schools with a monopolistic orientation are in the upper positions of the market hierarchy and take advantage of it to maintain their status, without having to take part in competitive dynamics with other schools. They are schools with good average scores and a good reputation. The competition space goes beyond its immediate surroundings, while more than half of its students come from outside the neighbourhood. Despite having a wide competition space, their niche position means that they do not show any interest in competitive or "conquest" logics but rather they maintain their current position:

> Q: Do you have more demand than vacancies?
>
> A: Yes, we have much more demand, but we do not want to extend the school size, we could open another line, but we do not want to do it. And the demand we have mostly comes from families from within the school. (C1_P1)

The closed position in the market, as well as the absence of perceived competitive pressure, can lead these schools to adopt more expressive approaches to education. Given their more homogeneous composition, they are not interested in carrying out instrumental actions of internal segmentation to respond to different student profiles and learning rhythms (Table 4). In contrast, they develop pedagogical innovations with a holistic curricular approach, encompassing areas of knowledge that are not strictly academic:

> What makes this school different are the methodologies. We have a good balance of different areas: humanities, science and arts. Arts are very important, we work deeply on creativity, theatre, music and plastics. This also makes us very different to other schools, for us these subjects are essential. (C1_P1)

These schools tend to adopt pedagogical views focused on academic excellence, but not because they aim to align with the goals and tools of the accountability system in place (Figure 2). They see the external test as something to which they "pay little attention" and which does not reflect their standard of "education quality". Education quality is something they achieve "slowly" working with a broad repertoire of strategies and activities, including "oral expression, theatre, radio projects" or "foreign language workshops or chess activities" (C1_P1).

Accordingly, in terms of how this affects their market position and the impact it has on the school pedagogical approach, the external test performance appears to be an issue of minor importance. In fact, the monopolistically-oriented school identified is the only one in our sample whose management team does not instruct or recommend teachers make students practise for the test or be aligned with the learning standards (Figure 2). Consequently this school has the lowest teaching-to-the-test rates (Figure 1). According to one principal interviewed they "show little interest" in the test and just perform it because "it is mandatory" (C1_P1). In a similar vein the vice principal of the same school suggests that the test is useless as a learning evaluation device:

> This [external] test is just focused on the performance and the contents; instead of what would be the entire [educational] process, so well… is just an exercise for us. (C1_P2)

The more elitist schools do not adopt promotional strategies because they already have a good reputation as well as a closed and stable market position. In such a closed market, the innovative progressive pedagogical approach serves the school as a niche strategy. The pedagogical innovations act as a seal of quality for these schools, which in turn attracts high-income families from various areas of Madrid seeking non-academic models (C1 school).

In this context, these schools do not need to compete for enrolment; they do not feel "at all any pressure for competition" because they have found a market niche and focus on a public that "finds very few alternatives" (CM_P1). They therefore do not give importance to marketing strategies and avoid engaging in large-scale promotional actions and organising events such as common open doors (see Table 5). As in other respects, schools at the top of the market hierarchy resemble the worst-off schools that have given up competing with other schools. However, their motives are obviously different, since it is their privileged position they occupy what leads them not to put competition at the centre of their educational and organizational decisions. Instead, they prefer "to receive families individually as vacancies need to be covered" (C1_P1) and rely on face-to-face interviews or personalised school visits, which allow them to deploy more informal selective practices (see also Table 5).

Schools' Logics of Actions, Market Position and Inner Tensions

Despite the fact that different logics of action predominate in each market segment, this does not mean that individual schools' responses to market pressures are univocal. Three kinds of tensions have been identified within schools when addressing competitive pressure: emulation-differentiation, innovation-tradition and segmentation-accommodation.

First, schools implement instructional and organisational changes as a response to market pressures for different reasons. These changes sit between emulation and differentiation mechanisms. Schools seem to face a dilemma between reducing risks of competition by means of behaving as others do, i.e., adopting particular school policies to "jump on board" (A1_P2), and "drifting along for trends" (B1_P1). The main rationale of the emulative mechanism is the minimisation of uncertainty and the risk of being left behind market trends:

> Schools look around them looking for what works because they do not want to be left behind, but the problem is that many times these things are implemented without any sense. (B2_P2)

At the same time as schools try to adhere themselves to trends that work in terms of attracting families' or students' attention and interests, they need to distinguish their educational offer from potential competitors as a way to create market niches and dilute external market pressures:

> We joined the bilingual programme for differentiation reasons; to give more importance to English and ensure our students to have a very good level. (A1_P1)

Schools deploying different logics of action move between emulation and differentiation mechanisms, although the tension is more clearly perceived in entrepreneurial schools, which share marketing and promotional activities as open doors days or the use of standardised test results as an indicator of quality, but also try to differentiate themselves from school alternatives by adopting specific educational programmes and offering non-curricular activities or complementary services. This tension is also present in tactician schools, which develop pedagogical innovations in order to attract middle-class families as emulation strategies, and at the same time engage in specific programmes to ensure differentiation.

Second, most schools report adopting pedagogical and organisational changes in order to adjust their teaching-learning processes. They aim to emphasise competence-based and active learning, and try to promote an image of the school as innovative and updated. Tactician schools also report the introduction of innovative pedagogical approaches in order to be more attractive to middle-class families. The monopolistic school has made innovation their seal of quality. However, an explicit tension between innovation and tradition is reported by principals, mainly from entrepreneurial schools, as a result of the diverse interests and pedagogical preferences of their target families. Schools with more academic reputation describe the profile of the families as worried about academic results and scores, demanding high academic standards. Schools that already include this type of family, report parental pressure when addressing innovations, since these families fear that such changes could contribute to lowering academic standards:

> Families with small children do not care yet, but when they reach higher grades, they start to worry about what could happen and they begin asking and questioning, about doing classes with books or not... this kind of thing. (B1_T1)

Finally, mainly adaptive schools tend to adopt an accommodation approach in order to adjust their practices to their students' learning needs. Nonetheless, those schools with a more heterogeneous student population, such as the tactician and the entrepreneurial schools, tend to combine accommodation and segmentation approaches, such as tracking, ability grouping, flexible grouping and so on, to adapt to different profiles of students and attend to their diverging needs:

> Individualised learning is very important because we have very different learning levels, so attention to diversity is very important in this school. (A6_P2)

Conclusions

From the analysis provided in this research, we have identified four main conclusions. First, the paper confirms that the governance and regulation of school systems is far more complex than formally acknowledged in official policy frameworks. Policy frameworks establish the boundaries of a given regulation, the main actors involved in the policy process, how power is distributed between actors, and the responsibilities coordinated among them. However, the emerging forms of post-bureaucratic governance imply more complex modes of regulation by means of multiple external pressures, from administrative control to interdependent competition. In this context, schools receive uneven forms of external pressure, and therefore can experience the same regulatory environment very differently. Analytically, the notion of schools' logics of action contributes to capture this complexity by operating as an intermediary concept between, on the one hand, pressure that comes from the policy and market structures and, on the other hand, specific and more empirically observable school responses.

Second, schools follow different patterns of behaviour and routines when reacting to external pressures. In Madrid, to a great extent, such patterns correspond to the four categories of logics

of action proposed by Van Zanten (2009) and Maroy and Van Zanten (2009) in other European settings. In Table 6 we synthesize the main characteristics of the logics of action that predominate in Madrid. We refer to the main conditions that contribute to these logics to emerge, to the main challenges that the schools adopting these logics aim to address, and to the main distinctive and secondary practices in which the logics crystallize.

Table 6: Logics of action and distinctive responses

Logics of action	Market position	Perceived competition	Main challenges	Main distinctive responses	Other compatible responses
Adaptive	Low	Low-med	Deal with vulnerable students & avoid marginalization	Instructional inclusive strategies & remedial approaches	Discipline & coexistence, internal differentiation, teaching to the test with medium to high intensity under remedial rationales
Tactician	Low to med	High	Deal with heterogeneity. Avoid decline & improve market position	Tracking, internal differentiation & ability grouping	Forms of superficial innovation; behavioural selection; school open days; teaching to the test with medium-intensity for instrumental purposes.
Entrepreneurial	Med to high	High	Deal with competition & improve market position	Extensive promotion and marketing activities (school open days, internet, social media, etc.) / Alignment with accountability goals; use of data for comparison and reputation building.	Selection (second order competition); forms of superficial innovation; external differentiation (niche strategies); cultural distinction activities, selective ad-hoc visits, teaching to the test with medium - high intensity under reputational rationales.
Monopolistic	High	Low	Maintain Status Quo	Selective ad hoc visits; external differentiation (niche strategies), expressive educational approaches.	Cultural distinction activities / absence of instrumental actions

Source: adapted following van Zanten (2009) and Maroy & van Zanten (2009)

Third, the results of our research validate the outstanding role and influence of the position that schools occupy in the LEM in understanding the different logics of action through which schools face external pressures. Despite the fact that school positions in the LEM are not fixed and can vary with the passage of time, our research shows that there is an important correspondence between a school's position in the market and the practices they can (and cannot) deploy to address competitive pressure. Our research provides an innovative index to define the position of schools in the local education markets. Our study identifies some of the main mechanisms through which both new governance instruments and locally-situated

competitive interdependencies potentially contribute to the reproduction and deepening of educational inequalities within multi-layered educational systems.

Fourth, the fact that our results identify regularities in the association between types of logics of action and schools' positions within the LEM does not mean that the schools' reactions to market pressures are univocal and seamless. On the contrary, these reactions can be labelled as tentative guesses generating specific tensions (namely, emulation-differentiation, innovation-tradition and segmentation-accommodation), as we have outlined in the study. Overall, the notion of logics of action appears to be a useful analytical concept to understand the interdependent patterns of organisational behaviour within local education spaces. Future research may benefit from analytically and empirically applying this notion in relation to emerging tensions and related mechanisms.

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Appendix: Key intervening factors

Table A. Position of schools according to key intervening factors (I)

School [1]	LEM position [2]		Origin of students [3]						Number of competitors and space of competition [4]							
	Index	**Categories**	**Neighborhood**		**District**		**Municipality**		**Number of competitors**		**Neighborhood**		**District**		**Municipality**	
			%	**Position**	**%**	**Position**	**%**	**Position**	**%**	**Position**	**%**	**Position**	**%**	**Position**	**%**	**Position**
B3	1,9	High	80	Above avg	10	Below avg	5	Below avg	3	Above avg	0	Below avg	100	Above avg	0	Below avg
B2	1,5	High	75	Above avg	16,7	Above avg	4,2	Below avg	2,2	Below avg	83,3	Above avg	16,7	Below avg	0	Below avg
A1	1,2	High	46,7	Below avg	36,7	Above avg	12,7	Above avg	3	Above avg	63,9	Above avg	19,4	Below avg	8,3	Below avg
B1	1,1	High	83,8	Above avg	9,8	Below avg	4,2	Below avg	2,8	Above avg	86,7	Above avg	13,3	Below avg	0	Below avg
C1	1,1	High	40	Below avg	22,5	Above avg	30	Above avg	2,8	Above avg	25	Below avg	25	Above avg	50	Above avg
B4	0,9	High	22,5	Below avg	22,5	Above avg	46,3	Above avg	2,5	Below avg	35	Below avg	10	Below avg	50	Above avg
A6	0,3	Mid-high	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d
A2	0,1	Mid-high	90	Above avg	6,5	Below avg	3,5	Below avg	2,5	Below avg	25	Below avg	75	Above avg	0	Below avg
A3	-0,1	Mid-low	50	Below avg	50	Above avg	0	Below avg	2,5	Below avg	58,3	Above avg	41,7	Above avg	0	Below avg
A5	-0,3	Mid-low	25	Below avg	25	Above avg	50	Above avg	4	Above avg	25	Below avg	75	Above avg	0	Below avg
A4	-1,4	Low	70	Below avg	17,5	Above avg	7,5	Below avg	4	Above avg	66,7	Above avg	16,7	Below avg	16,7	Below avg
A7	-2	Low	80	Above avg	16,7	Above avg	3,3	Below avg	1,5	Below avg	100	Above avg	0	Below avg	0	Below avg

Table B. Position of schools according to key intervening factors (II)

School [1]	LEM position [2]		Average school performance		School reputation in the local community				School demand	Market pressure	
	Index	**Categories**	**Index**	**Categories**	**Principals**	**Teachers**	**Index**	**Categories**	**Ratio applications / places**	**Index**	**Categories**
B3	1,9	High	0,92	High	Above	Above	1,47	High	Many more applications than places	0,12	Med-high
B2	1,5	High	1,25	High	Above	Above	1,28	High	A few more applications than places	1,21	High
A1	1,2	High	0,8	High	Above	Above	0,72	Med-high	Many more applications than places	1,47	High
B1	1,1	High	1,63	High	Above	Above	0,76	High	A few more applications than places	0,61	High
C1	1,1	High	1,42	High	Above	Above	0,76	High	A few more applications than places	-1,22	Low
B4	0,9	High	0,02	Med-high	Above	Above	0,6	Med-high	Many more applications than places	-0,07	Med-low
A6	0,3	Mid-high	-1	Low	Above	Above	1,12	High	n/d	0,98	High
A2	0,1	Mid-high	0,37	Med-high	Above	Average	-0,16	Med-low	A few more applications than places	0,29	Med-high
A3	-0,1	Mid-low	-0,13	Med-low	Above	Above	0,39	Med-high	A few more places than applications	-0,93	Low
A5	-0,3	Mid-low	-0,81	Low	Average	Average	-0,38	Med-low	A few more applications than places	0,15	Med-high
A4	-1,4	Low	-0,39	Med-low	Average	Below	-1,25	Low	A few more places than applications	-0,8	Med-low
A7	-2	Low	-2,58	Low	Average	Below	-1,83	Low	A few more applications than places	-0,44	Med-low

Note: [1] Schools have been codified according to their ownership: public schools have been codified with the letter A, publicly funded private schools as B, and private schools with C. [2] The values of all the factors have been ordered according to the LEM position index. [3] The average percentages of students who come from the neighborhood, the district and the municipality are, respectively: 70.7%, 14.8%, 10.9%. [4] The average number of competing schools and the percentage of competing schools according to their location (neighborhood, district and municipality) are, respectively: 2.7, 52%, 23%, 22%.

CHAPTER 6: THE ENACTMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY INSTRUMENTS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

Pagès, M. (2021). Enacting performance-based accountability in a Southern European school system: between administrative and market logics. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 1-27.

Enacting Performance-Based Accountability in a Southern European School System: Between Administrative and Market Logics

Abstract:

Performance-Based Accountability (PBA) policies are increasingly adopted in a wide range of education systems in order to reform school governance and to improve students' results and schools' performance. Countries around the world have been implementing national large-scale assessments to make school actors more accountable and responsible for students' results. This policy model has been generalized in countries with different administrative traditions, including those with a short tradition in New Public Management. This is the case in Spain, where PBA has been adopted unevenly in different regions, with Madrid being one of the earliest adopters. In recent decades, Madrid has developed a model that combines administrative test-based accountability with a system of broad parental school choice, which also facilitates the activation of market forms of accountability. However, the combination and interaction between market and administrative forms of accountability is understudied. This paper adopts a policy enactment perspective to analyse, through a case study approach, the interaction of administrative and market forms of accountability and its enactment at the school level. The case study is based on a set of 41 semi-structured interviews with teachers, principals and school inspectors in a sample of eight schools in Madrid, combined with document analysis of school educational projects and improvement plans. The evidence suggests that administrative and market forms of accountability tend to generate dynamics of interdependence, resulting in increasing external pressures which schools tend to address with superficial responses, including teaching to the test, or second order competition between schools.

Key words: Performance-based Accountability, Policy Enactment, Education Policy, Decoupling, School Choice.

Introduction

In increasingly competitive and inter-dependent world economies, school improvement programmes, oriented to foster student learning and instrumental competences, are currently at the core of managerial reform agendas in education. Performance-Based Accountability (PBA) policies are one specific manifestation of this global reform trend, aiming to make school actors more accountable to different audiences on the basis of student performance in external national tests. Indeed, this reform approach tends to be adopted together with the prescription of learning standards, but it is also accompanied by the promotion of higher levels of decentralization and school autonomy, implying new governance arrangements for educational systems (Verger,

Parcerisa et al. 2019). In this policy context, schools are expected to make use of their margins of autonomy to develop educational projects better aligned with student needs in order to enhance learning, reach the standards, and improve student performance in external and standardized tests. Schools are also expected to use data generated by the standardized national tests in order to identify weaknesses and implement corrective measures. The combination of these elements implies new modes of external and internal regulation of schools and, in certain circumstances, could involve increasing performative pressures among school actors (Ball, 2003; Perryman, et al. 2011; Falabella, 2014) producing unintended effects such as teaching to the test, student triage, or cream-skimming (Mittleman and Jennings, 2018).

This policy approach shares some global common traits, but is adapted and translated in different settings according to institutional variables and to political or economic junctures. The specific translation of PBA reforms in different countries interacts with the prevailing administrative traditions, the governance architecture of education systems, the association with other education policies, and other contextual conditions. Despite divergences, accountability reforms have been increasingly disseminated around the world, and the use of national standardized tests to assess student performance is being generalized, even in countries without managerial-oriented administrative traditions (Verger, Fontdevila et al. 2019). This is the case in Spain, where accountability policies have been adopted and implemented unevenly across regions, Madrid being one of the most active in deploying and using external and standardized tests to reform the governance of education (Verger, Prieto et al. 2020; Authors, 2020). In Madrid, schools are subject to an accountability regulatory framework that combines (i) bureaucratic control through inspection services; (ii) external and standardized evaluation of school performance; and (iii) parental school choice. The combination of these regulatory elements provides an excellent context to study and analyse the interaction and juxtaposition of different forms of accountability, mainly market-oriented and administrative-based. Both forms of accountability have often been analysed separately, sometimes under the formal assumption that both work autonomously.

Nonetheless, the implementation of accountability schemes is not a linear process and is highly reliant on how school actors interpret and translate the different prerogatives of multiple accountability policy mandates, often implying a superposition of multiple external demands, which schools face simultaneously and need to de-codify and translate into different institutional and socio-economic contexts. Such contexts can foster or inhibit specific forms of policy enactment. For this reason, a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the interaction between administrative and market forms of accountability would improve our understanding of the policy enactments of PBA at the school level.

Aiming to address this gap, this study examines the enactment of accountability policy mechanisms in a quasi-market educational setting. Specifically, its main objectives are (i) to analyse the interaction of different forms of accountability to which schools are subject; (ii) to better understand how school actors make sense of these forms of accountability and (iii) to identify the strategies and practices through which schools address external accountability pressures. In order to achieve these objectives, this paper presents a case study of the enactment of accountability reforms at the school level in Madrid, combining interviews with school actors (n=41) in eight primary schools with document analysis of school educational projects and improvement plans.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the analytical approach of the study is presented, which is followed by a section outlining the main characteristics of the study's policy context, including recent accountability reforms. The next section presents the methodological strategy of the research, specifying aspects of data gathering, sampling and analysis. Subsequently, the results of the empirical research are presented, organized according to the three main objectives of the study. The paper ends by presenting the main conclusions and implications in terms of policy and research.

Beyond Implementation: The Policy Enactment of PBA

PBA systems aim to enhance the responsibility of school actors regarding the quality and performance of student learning, measured on the basis of external testing. However, accountability schemes can follow different approaches and be formally configured through multiple policy designs. Furthermore, the implementation of accountability arrangements is not a linear process. It implies a complex and contradictory dynamic in which school actors have to translate and negotiate policy prerogatives –in this case those attached to different accountability policy tools– into specific school practices (Ball et al. 2012). In this paper, instead of policy implementation, the notion of policy enactment is used to analyse the interpretation and translation made by policy actors in order to "put policies into practice" in a "creative, sophisticated and complex but also constrained process" (Braun et al. 2011, p. 586).

Interpretation and Sense-making

From the point of view of policy enactment theories, policies are not mechanically implemented but result from complex processes of negotiation, de-codification and adaptation of meanings. Indeed, the meanings, objectives and ideas attached to policies are not always obvious but can be rather presented in ambivalent and ambiguous ways. This applies in particular to "meanings and practices surrounding accountability" which are not "absolute, but rather inherently problematic" (Gawlik, 2015, p. 396). Hence, within accountability systems, teachers and

principals act as enactors who have to interpret and make sense of different policy messages according to collective and individual subjective accounts.

The way school actors make sense of a new reform is contingent to how these actors have received and understood previous policies in the past. Indeed, "what a policy comes to mean for implementing agents depends to a great extent on their repertoire of existing knowledge and experience" (Spillane et al, 2002, 393). School actors are more likely to incorporate familiar ideas and to ignore other ideas that are not in line with their current practices and beliefs. This is a cognitive process that often leads to misunderstandings within the implementation of new policy mandates (Spillane, 2009). Thus, in order to analyse the policy enactment of PBA, we have to consider school actors' previous beliefs, knowledge, practices and routines. Sense making refers here to an individual sphere; however, it should be also considered as a relational phenomenon build on social interaction and shared understandings (Spillane et al, 2002) that affect how "individuals and groups actively construct understandings and interpretations" about specific policy messages by "placing them into pre-existing cognitive frameworks" (Coburn, 2005, p. 478). Moreover, the process of interpretation does not take place in a vacuum but is embedded in organizational contexts, institutional environments and professional cultures, among other dimensions (Spillane et al, 2002).

Overall, the success of a given policy reform is not only based on "efficient" designs, but is highly reliant on how enactors interpret and make sense of policy messages in particular school contexts. Moreover, the subjective perception of different external policy pressures – either market-based or administrative oriented – is a constitutive part of this process and affects its subsequent responses and translations (Verger, Ferrer et al, 2020).

External Demands and Accountability Pressures

Under accountability regimes schools face multiple and complex policy demands, which can be internally contradictory or can contradict other overlapping policy mandates. For instance, accountability relationships activate reputational concerns that act as a filtering mechanism to interpret and respond to multiple audiences (families, educational authorities, school owners, etc.), with diverging and even contradictory demands (Busuioc and Lodge, 2017). Administrative and market forms of accountability activate different forms of policy pressures towards schools, although "what makes schools reactive is not only the level of pressure that regulations exert but also the pressure that school actors perceive, live and experience" (Verger, Ferrer et al, 2020, 223). From this perspective, the perceived pressure is a central element to understand how school actors make sense of accountability regulations and how they respond to different external demands.

The so-called "decoupling argument", developed by neo-institutionalist theorists in the late 1970s, suggests that policy reforms tend to fail because a disconnection emerges between the external demands of the policy environment and actual organizational practices. This approach suggests that organizations tend to face and address external pressures of the institutional environment by strategically adopting symbolic changes in the organizational structure, without internalizing relevant changes into day-to-day practices. Hence, decoupling appears when organizations aim to solve conflicting and contradictory institutional demands by disconnecting formal organizational structures from actual practices (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

The emergence of decoupling dynamics could be explained by different factors, including the various coercive pressures experienced by organizational actors, the trust relationships among policy and school actors, as well as the subjective beliefs regarding the efficacy of the measures which have to be implemented (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017, p. 21).

As a result of decades of research and theoretical refinement, the main argument of the early contributions of neo-institutionalism regarding the notion of decoupling has been nuanced, suggesting increasing dynamics of policy alignment in contexts of accountability and more complex responses to external policy demands and accountability pressures.

School Responses and Policy Translations

Schools react to external policy pressures with complex and multiple organizational and instructional responses, which should be analysed beyond a binary approach of alignment and decoupling, in order to focus on a broader range of responses "from passive conformity to active resistance, depending on the nature and context of the (external policy) pressures" (Oliver, 1991 p. 146). Focusing on schools, Coburn (2004) suggests that we should "rethink the decoupling argument" providing evidence on how the policy environment "penetrates schools in substantial ways" and how school actors respond to them. Such responses include forms of non-incorporation of the policy messages (with strategies of open rejection, decoupling and parallel structures) and forms of incorporation (with assimilation and accommodation responses), which are developed by means of teachers' agency in a context of "bonded autonomy" (Coburn, 2004).

Another aspect to take into consideration when "rethinking" the decoupling argument is that the policy context has changed significantly since the 1970s. The introduction of accountability mechanisms were intended, and partially achieved, to reinforce the alignment between instructional practices and policy expectations. In fact, more recent neo-institutionalist studies stressed that current accountability schemes "have led to a shift to more tightly coupled and narrowed controlled practices in organizations" (Meyer, H. D. and Rowan, 2006, p. 2). Certainly, accountability mechanisms, especially those with high-stakes policy designs, appear to be able to partially penetrate classroom practices (Diamond, 2012), despite sometimes

disrupting teacher autonomy (Hallet, 2010, p. 61) and resulting in policy outcomes that differ from initial expectations, including narrowing the curriculum or the reinforcement of test-driven educational approaches (Lipman, 2004; Au, 2007).

Despite the fact that that high-stakes accountability seems to operate with a greater capacity for policy alignment, a recent sequential and mixed-methods study (Verger, Ferrer et al. 2020) has suggested that high-stakes systems do not always function "as a performative device in all circumstances" (p. 18). This research suggests that schools react to accountability pressures with divergent responses "which go beyond conventional classifications mainly focusing on alignment vs decoupling" (p. 17) and are significantly mediated by how school actors interpret the accountability mandates, and even more importantly, by how they experience the subjective pressures resulting from accountability policy instruments in different school contexts. Accordingly, schools react to accountability pressures with different responses, namely, accommodation, induced alignment, dilution, fabrication and de facto opting out.

An increasing body of research has also analysed school responses to low-stakes accountability systems, those which do not attach clear and explicit schemes of incentives and sanctions to the test results, and formally rely on the reflexivity and data-use capacity of school actors in addressing policy expectations (Maroy, 2015; Landri, 2018; Skedsmo, 2011). In a comparative study between two different schemes of accountability, Dumay et al. (2013) found that networked forms of accountability tend to promote better policy alignment than bureaucratic forms of accountability, whereas other studies suggest that low-stakes accountability systems in quasi-market settings induce schools to respond superficially to accountability demands, generating symbolic changes in schools and dynamics of policy decoupling (Barbana et al., 2019; Maroy, 2015). Indeed, low-stakes accountability systems generate multiple school and policy responses, which to a great extent rely on policy design variables. For instance, in a comparative study, Maroy and Pons (2019) found that the re-contextualization of low-stakes accountability in Quebec generated pedagogical practices that were better aligned to managerial expectations with similar effects as high-stakes schemes. However, in France, accountability tools were adopted with no relevant impact on teaching practice and instruction. At the school level, other decoupled responses to accountability regulations were reported in French-speaking Belgium, where the more reactive schools responded with forms of "horizontal decoupling", meaning a disconnection between the policy implementation of testing with its ends and means, "implementing the mandatory part of the accountability instruments while avoiding a real penetration into the cognitive scripts of schools" (Barbana et al., 2019, p. 12).

Informed by these theoretical and empirical accounts, this paper aims to understand the enactment of PBA in Madrid by analysing the way policy design mediates the sense-making

process of accountability tools and how school actors respond, generating dynamics of alignment and decoupling of low-stakes accountability arrangements in a quasi-market education system.

Policy Context

South European countries are particularly interesting contexts in which to study the adoption and enactment of PBA reforms. In countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal, recent accountability reforms have been introduced under the tenets of New Public Management (see Verger and Curran, 2014; Parcerisa, 2016; Landri, 2018; Carvalho et al. 2020). However these are countries where NPM does not have a strong or long-lasting tradition in public administration, and the policy adoption of such reforms have tended to be erratic and contradictory. Spain is a late adopter of accountability reforms in education and, as in other sectors of public administration, has adopted these mechanisms following a quality assurance rationale. Within the Spanish education context, Madrid is an exception to this dynamic in the sense that accountability reforms have followed a quality assurance motivation, but also aimed at the introduction of market logics and competition dynamics in the school system (Villamor and Prieto, 2016).

At the beginning of the 2000s, Madrid stated a governance reform of education which included the introduction of accountability policy tools, school autonomy measures and the promotion of school choice. In parallel, the publicly subsidized private school sector was expanded[60] with the intention of promoting school diversification and increasing school choice opportunities (Carpintero and Siemiatycki, 2015). This education policy approach contributed to enhance the already high levels of school segregation in Madrid (Bonal and Zancajo, 2018) and further consolidated educational inequalities (Escardíbul, J. O. and Villarroya, A., 2009).

In Madrid, the external test was introduced in 2005 to increase curriculum control and improve transparency in school results in order to enhance parental school choice. Nonetheless, the trajectory of accountability policy instruments has been far from linear, and suffered at least two main changes: the dissemination of the test results and the evaluative model of the test.

Regarding the policy of test result transparency, the results of the external test were publicly disseminated in different formats between 2005 and 2015, altering the school governance dynamics and generating notable external pressures. Initially, the test results were made public in the form of school rankings, which triggered great opposition from teachers, principals and

[60] According to Carpintero and Siemiatycki (2015), between 2005 and 2012, new Public-Private Partnerships were agreed to build and operate schools to provide education for about 60,000 students and with a total investment of around 650 million euros (439).

public-school families (Verger, Prieto et al., 2020). However, since 2015, the results are no longer published. Interestingly, this change did not result from a governmental turn but from a variety of factors including a lack of policy consensus, administrative barriers and issues of political leadership. Very briefly, it is important to highlight that the adoption of a high stakes accountability policy model in Madrid was the result of a very particular policy leadership dynamics within the regional government. Once this leadership declined, a shift towards a more pragmatic policy approach was adopted by educational authorities in 2015, assuming that a lower stakes accountability model would allow at the same time to reach higher levels of political consensus and a better alignment with the national policy framework (Pagès & Prieto, 2020). In this context, the same administration that established the standardized test ended the policy of transparency without major political noise. Thus, Madrid represents a very particular policy context to study accountability in the sense that it has moved, in a relatively short period of time, from a high-stakes accountability system to a lower-stakes approach.

The second main change refers to the evaluative model of the test. The first models of the external test were designed with a content-oriented and memory-based approach. This continued until 2015 when the test changed and adopted a more complex design based on skills and instrumental competences.

Currently, the test results are disseminated to the families and the schools, which are obligated to develop a Performance Improvement Plan based on the analysis of the external test data. Schools are asked to analyse retrospectively the results of the external test, compare it with the internal evaluation and identify aspects of improvement in instrumental skills. The improvement plans should incorporate general and specific objectives, didactic methodologies, specific interventions and evaluation indicators. These plans are monitored and evaluated by the school inspection body and are expected to guide the process of internal evaluation for school improvement on the basis of teachers' and principals' reflexivity.

The policy context and the trajectory of accountability policies in Madrid are characterized by a sort of back and forth dynamics regarding the design and the policy expectations attached to PBA. In this context, this research suggests two preliminary hypotheses regarding the way that the policy framework has influenced the enactment of accountability arrangements in Madrid. First, the uneven policy trajectory of PBA and the back and forth dynamics regarding the use of accountability policy tools and the accompanying expectations, would contribute to a superficial implementation of accountability policy instruments in schools, without altering the organizational routines of schools or the teaching practices. The second hypothesis suggests that the policy precedents related to the publication of school results generated a testing performative pressure that tended to persist among school actors. This occurred even in lower-

stakes systems, especially when combined with market forms of accountability and mechanisms of parental school choice, resulting in school-level effects similar to those seen in high-stakes accountability models.

Methods

To better understand the sense-making process of PBA and its translations into specific school practices, this paper conducts qualitative empirical research on the basis of the case study approach. More specifically, this research develops an explanatory single case study with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2003). The case study approach is appropriate when studying a contemporary social phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the object of study and the context are not clear (Yin, 2003, p. 13). In this research, the enactment of PBA in Madrid is conceived of as the analysed case, whereas the different schools included in the sample are treated as embedded units of analysis. This approach is adopted to analyse how a particular social phenomenon – the enactment of PBA in Madrid – takes place in different circumstances and conditions, namely divergent institutional and contextual school settings. The results are not presented as differentiating by each unit of analysis, but as focusing on the conditions and the generative mechanisms of certain sense-making processes and school practices. The analysis, therefore, pays special attention to the potential mediating conditions of policy enactment, looking at school-level factors such as student performance, the role of school culture, and the subjective pressures experienced by teachers and principals.

The primary data for the study come from semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers and principals. Assuming that the institutional and contextual factors influence different forms of policy enactment, the case study gathers data from eight schools with different social and organizational characteristics. The schools have been selected following theoretical sampling criteria according to different factors including (i) the type of school provider (public or private); (ii) the socio-economic status of the school (defined by the income level of the school neighbourhood as a proxy); and (iii) the school culture (defined inductively as more traditional or more innovative according to accounts based on explorative and qualitative fieldwork in a broader sample of schools). Moreover, three extra interviews with school inspectors have been included to address three main issues. The first issue is to better understand bureaucratic forms of accountability, the second issue is to incorporate *meso* elements and interschool dynamics into the analysis, and the third issue is to add an external account of how schools implement accountability arrangements.

Table 1: **Sampling and detail of interviews**

School	Provider	SES level	S. Ethos	Teachers	Principals	Inspectors
A	Public	Low	Mixed	3	1	
B	Public	Med-low	Traditional	1	2	
C	Public	Med	Innovative	2	3	
D	Public	Med-high	Traditional	3	3	
E	Private	Med	Traditional	2	2	
F	Private	Med-high	Mixed	2	3	
G	Private	High	Traditional	4	3	
H	Private	High	Innovative	2	2	
Total				19	19	3

As can be observed in Table 1, a sample of key informants were interviewed in each school. These interviews have been complemented and triangulated with document analysis and preliminary non-systematic observations in each school. The document analysis and the primary observations were used as a strategy to define the sample of schools included in the research and as complementary sources of information, whereas the interviews were treated as the main fieldwork data for the analysis. This methodological decision has allowed more schools to be covered in different institutional and social contexts in order to focus on the conditions that influence policy enactment. The schools are treated as sampling units and the individual actors (teachers and principals) as the main units of analysis embedded in a particular school context. When the responses of teachers and principals within one school concur and school documents and preliminary observational notes are in agreement, then aggregated individual responses are analytically inferred to be school-level responses.

The main research instrument used is the semi-structured interview script, which included questions about personal background, school context and culture, subjective opinions regarding PBA and school practices. Textual qualitative data were analysed with inductive emerging codes and predefined deductive codes regarding the school context and culture, the interpretation of accountability policy instruments, and the translation into specific school practices. Specialized software for qualitative analysis of textual data was used to conduct the analysis of interviews.

Results: Understanding Policy Enactment of PBA in Madrid

In this section, the results of the research are presented and analysed according to the different objectives that guide the study as outlined in the introduction section. Accordingly, this section gives accounts of the different policy interpretations and rationalities of school actors regarding PBA, the interaction of different forms of accountability and its associated external pressures, as well as the resulting school practices and responses.

Policy Interpretations and Multiple Rationalities

The results of the interviews show how school actors make sense of PBA in diverging and non-univocal forms. The interpretation of testing policy instruments varies between and within schools and is conditioned by both contextual elements and factors of a subjective nature. In this section, an analysis of the different interpretations of PBA is presented according to the different rationales and dimensions of the policy. By doing this, the findings highlight how the sense-making process of accountability policy instruments goes beyond con/pro positions. That is, the analysis reveals that neither schools nor individuals can be easily labelled regarding their opinion about PBA since their positions tend to be more nuanced and contingent on the policy dimensions in question.

The school actors interviewed tended to assume a vague positive opinion of the testing instrument, specifically regarding the evaluative approach of the test. Here, the precedents of the evaluative design of external tests are crucial to understand this specific form of interpretation. The school actors interviewed stress the virtues of the current model, which is perceived to be a "better idea" due to the "competence-based approach" (Teacher 7, School D), more appropriate and adapted to the teaching-learning process, relatively well "aligned to what students should know, understand and do" (Principal 4, School C), involving "creativity" and "establishing relationships between different problems" (Teacher 19, School H).

Another positive aspect that most of the principals highlight is the non-dissemination of the test results. Here again, policy precedents play a key role, and the end of the policy of school scores publication is seen as a positive change by all the school principals interviewed. Nevertheless, although school results are no longer published, such a precedent still operates generating a subjective sense of pressure as will be further analysed.

The general nature and the purposes of PBA are interpreted in a more ambivalent way. Some teachers and principals suggest that "a control mechanism is important" (Principal 2, School B) and "some kind of external evaluation is positive" (Principal 10, School E). It is understood as an improvement mechanism to "make sure people do not relax" (Teacher 6, School C). However, this vague positive opinion is broadly surpassed by criticisms of PBA, which place

the emphasis on different meaning frames: pedagogical, professional, social justice-oriented and reputational.

Pedagogical meaning frame: Most teachers interviewed criticize the external test because of concerns for student wellbeing. They point out that the test implies great levels of stress and pressure for students. This argument is usually present in schools that are more focused on socio-emotional approaches than student performance, and are usually those schools attended by disadvantaged students. In middle-class and more innovative schools, a similar critical discourse with testing was found. In these cases, teachers highlight that the external standardized test implies significant tensions with normative educational approaches and schools' pedagogical models such as personalized learning or cooperative methodologies.

> They [the educational authorities] ask us to adapt teaching to our students and their capacities, so why there is a single external exam for all? What kind of adaptation is that? (Teacher 6, School C)

> Our students struggle with the external test because they are used to working differently, here we teach on self-reflection, they should do a process and work cooperatively. They are not used to working with this kind of tasks. (Principal 19, School H)

Professional meaning frame: An argument in parallel with this pedagogical rationale is related to the teachers' sense of professionalism, which appears to be challenged when teachers "feel questioned if the results are not good enough" (Teacher 5, School C). Despite this, most teachers and principals agree that the results of the external test "do not reflect the work a teacher can do with students" (Principal 1, School A) and "do not reflect (education) quality" (Principal 19, School H). This feeling of judgement is shared among tested teachers. Even though the test is not formally used to evaluate teachers, teachers from different schools and contexts agree that the external test implies a certain level of distrust regarding teachers' work, professional duties and their judgement capacity.

> I think we are, as teachers, honest enough to be externally judged about our work (…) you do not have to be judged or exposed to people that do not know how we work. (Teacher 14, School G)

> Deep inside, this test denotes distrust towards teaching professionals and implies a devaluation of their qualitative and professional function. (Inspector 2)

This argument is shared by teachers in schools with different pedagogical approaches and with very different student profiles, but is mainly an argument articulated by senior professionals teaching tested subjects.

Social Justice meaning frame: Another critical interpretation is based on a social justice approach and suggests that an external and standardized test is not a fair evaluation instrument

because it is not adapted to the contextual realities of students and schools. The main claim in this regard is that the test is a “de-contextualized” (Principal 5, School C) evaluation instrument because of its standardized nature. Moreover, some teachers perceive that the external test contributes to classify schools in different positions according to student background, and simply verifies the lack of familiar support and previous deficits in the acquisition of instrumental competences of disadvantaged students.

> I think this test is just to classify schools and I think this is not fair considering our student population. For example, it is impossible to achieve the same results here than in my neighbourhood, or in Las Rozas, or in Majadahonda [affluent areas], because children are already much more stimulated in every way. (Teacher 2, School A)

The social justice rationale approach is present in schools from different contexts, but is clearly a more intense and common discourse in public schools enrolling students from disadvantaged backgrounds regardless of the school’s pedagogical orientation.

Reputational meaning frame: Contingent to the social justice rationale, a final critical interpretation is based on a negative understanding of testing due the reputational pressures that schools face because of the publication of the test results, which were seen as "terrible, offensive and shameless" (Principal 2, School B), "uncomfortable" (Principal 15, School G) "used perversely" (Teacher 8, School D) and contributing to make "first class and second class schools" (Principal 1, School A). These arguments are broadly shared by teachers and principals and very well represented by a common idea that suggests the test is internally relatively useful, but externally damaging, as expressed by one teacher:

> The test can give you an approach on where you fail, which is not bad, so I would use it internally but not for external exposition. (Teacher 14, School G)

Not surprisingly, if the non-dissemination of school results is seen as positive, the transparency of school scores is interpreted critically for different reasons, including the increasing market pressures associated (related to student attraction capacity and loss of students if the school performance is worse than expected) or the pressures exerted by other actors including parents, owners or the educational authorities.

The next section addresses the way these pressures are perceived and how school actors respond to them with a range of different school practices.

The Double Face of Accountability Pressures

Accountability pressures come from different sources and audiences, imply different expectations and are perceived unevenly by school actors with different levels of intensity and importance. In the section below, I focus on how administrative and market forms of accountability interact and generate specific forms of external pressure in different school contexts, and how school actors face them.

Administrative Accountability Pressures

Administrative forms of accountability imply the interaction between schools and educational authorities and combine reputational effects with elements of administrative support and control. Principals report uneven levels of administrative pressure, and when these are present, they seem to be driven, especially in public schools, by the hierarchical component of the accountability relationship between inspectors and principals. Interestingly, despite there being no formal scheme of sanctions and incentives, this relationship is often understood as an external form of work control.

> Well, yes, I feel pressure (…) if your results are very bad it seems like the inspection is *running your work*. I know that the inspection gives importance to these results. (…) So, if your *superiors* give importance to that, there is a certain pressure to ensure that everything is going well. (Principal 7, School D)

Principals in public schools feel more directly pressured by educational authorities than those in publicly subsidized private schools, especially in terms of bureaucratic requirements, but not regarding school performance. Formally, both types of schools were equally accountable to public administration, but the subjective perceptions of school actors regarding the role of educational authorities differ slightly. In both types of schools, the role of the educational authorities is generally seen as a form of bureaucratic control for the accomplishment of certain legal requirements, but the administrative pressure regarding student performance is not a generalized concern among teachers. In contrast, principals, especially in public schools, emphasize the role of school inspectors as monitoring agents of school performance and learning standards. At the same time, it is mainly in public schools attended by disadvantaged students where teachers and principals report a lack of administrative support and PBA is seen as a trigger for shaming and blaming dynamics.

> Despite poor results, we have never received any support (…). They cannot *blame us* for the shortfalls this school could have, or any other in Madrid's deprived areas. Where are the resources? (Teacher 3, School A)

> I think external testing is useless, they spend a lot of money analysing these results (…) but what do they do with underperforming schools? (...) They do not do anything, just *point at schools* and say "how badly the students in this school are doing", so it is useless. (Principal 2, School B)

Other teachers state that they do not feel directly pressured by inspectors, but by other complementary and indirect sources, which tend to be self-generated, yet are also driven by reputational concerns regarding educational authorities and families.

> No, no, [the educational authorities] don't say anything but you pressure yourself because you want to leave your school in a good position. (Teacher 12, School F)

In private institutions, the school owner develops functions very similar to those exerted by educational authorities and are often seen as "another school inspection" which "asks for a lot of paperwork" and requires specific forms of school organization (Teacher 14, School G). In some cases, school owners act as administrative account-holders controlling the evaluation and monitoring of performance standards. Interestingly, school owners also develop an administrative role ensuring the accomplishment of guidelines "dictating certain norms" and being "something apart which regulate schools" (Teacher 19, School H). In fact, some publicly subsidized private schools suggest that they are held accountable by their owners more than by public authorities. In these cases, school owners tend to act as constrainers of pedagogical school autonomy by defining specific appealing educational approaches for families, often used as a strategy of differentiation in order to improve the school's relative position in the market-place. School owners are in this sense a very interesting accountability actor, who can skilfully synthesize market and administrative demands.

Market Accountability Pressures

Under quasi-market regulations, organizations tend to be increasingly accountable to their "clients" in order to deliver a "quality product" on the basis of choice and demand. Market forms of school accountability are based on the relationship between school and family preferences, often mediated by normative notions of quality education. The results of this research suggest that the pressures exerted by market forms of accountability appear to be more intense and powerful than expected in all types of schools studied. The logics of market accountability sometimes appear together with elements of PBA, but the results also indicate certain autonomy of the market mechanisms from PBA arrangements. In Madrid, accountability arrangements and market regulations have aimed to modulate the behaviour of school actors, consolidating an increasing social interest in school performance, as well as a certain audit culture, which was recently channelled by informal means of communication, as suggested by a school inspector:

> Even though rankings are not in place, schools still use the results of the external test. (…) If you talk with parents when they are going to choose schools, one thing that they ask principals is about school test performance. (Inspector 1)

In this context, school actors still perceive PBA as a policy instrument of a reputational and market-oriented nature, which can damage the image of schools in a free school choice environment with high levels of competition. Some school actors report feeling less pressured since the finalization of the policy of transparency, but suggest that the main source of pressure was generated by school choice dynamics, mainly influenced by the levels of school demand.

> Yes, test results are very important, especially when they were published on the Internet. There was a lot of pressure related to parental school choice. However, our school has always had many students, so we were less worried. I mean, we were not worried regarding loss of students but well, you always want to have a good image. (Teacher 19, School H)

The school ethos and the educational aspirations of families configure to a great extent the dynamics of market accountability. In high-performing schools that enrol students with advantaged backgrounds, performance is taken for granted and the academic culture is part of the school identity. In these contexts, achieving and maintaining good results in the external test seems to be a priority to sustain the school image and internal legitimacy. In addition, good results ensure the loyalty of families. Families emerge as the main pressuring actor regarding school performance, often more important than educational authorities.

> This is not about the administration. Pressure comes from families, because of such a competitive environment, in which they want their children performing so much, out-standing from the beginning. There is more pressure from families and from a very broad school supply in this area. (Principal 17, School G)

However, the test not only works as an internal source of legitimacy, but also as a strategy for external reputation building. Schools struggling to recruit students experience testing in a dual manner, both as a mechanism of reputation building, but also as a potential threat for student recruitment. Indeed, principals in these schools suggest that families tend to "choose on the basis of the external test" (Principal 14, School F) using non-official data which circulates "by word of mouth" and which could "spread as an unfounded rumour" (Principal 12, School F). In these contexts, the external test appears to be a critical factor contributing to building or eroding the school reputation and its capacity for student recruitment, by means of a "*call effect"* mechanism related to the test performance (Teacher 11, School E).

The emergence of market forms of accountability is not exclusive to institutions with a high educational reputation, it also emerges in other types of school. In public schools with a more academic ethos, performative pressures remained, together with reputational concerns and

dynamics of school competition. These are internalized as a form of "teachers' responsibility in terms of image" (Teacher 4, School B). Despite the fact that test results are not published, the importance of performance among families and the role the non-formal means of information dissemination, contribute to developing and maintaining market pressures in schools. As happens in private schools with higher reputation, principals in public schools enrolling middle-class students stress that parents actively collect information about school performance during enrolment periods and this has an effect on student recruitment.

> These rankings, which arrive at the media, I don't know how, make us have more enrolment. And I know that during the enrolment period parents do amazing and great studies on this. (Principal 8, School D)

> Parents come to ask for information about the school and they directly ask for the external test, so yes, this is a pressure that makes us, externally, have a certain reputation or another. (Principal 3, School B)

Indeed, for certain schools the test could be used for reputation building and marketing purposes as stated by a principal who suggests that "this test only serves for some schools to reach a certain status" (Principal 5, School C). Interestingly, the reputational component of performance in a free school choice environment is indirectly generated by the increasing performance culture among parents which "exert pressure over principals like they never did before" (Inspector 1). Nevertheless, this trend is also context specific. Schools enrolling disadvantaged students do not experience such direct parental pressure. Such pressure is more likely to appear in schools enrolling middle-class and advantaged students. However, disadvantaged schools experience more indirect forms of market accountability pressures as the result of not being actively chosen. In these schools, the relationship between school performance, student population and school choice is described as a "loop" that makes these schools look like a "ghetto" and become socially stigmatized. These schools can try to reverse such an image with efforts to attract families from other social backgrounds in order to "change the student population" and "improve the school reputation" (Principal 1, School A). Despite this, the stigmatization that these schools suffer often dilutes their student attraction capacity.

Overall, the results suggest that PBA does not work in isolation from market dynamics, and seems to be relatively weak in generating administrative pressure on its own. However, when accountability and testing instruments interact with school choice and market mechanisms, accountability instruments are more able and likely to generate an increasing performance culture and pressure among school actors.

Policy Translations and School Responses

The interpretation of the policy mandates of PBA and the different forms in which accountability and market pressures are experienced, derive in specific forms of policy translations which are expressed in particular school practices and responses. In the context of this research, four main school practices can be identified in response to PBA. Two of them are policy outcomes expected within the policy framework, namely the adoption of competence-based methodologies and data-use practices for improvement purposes. Two others can be labelled as undesirable or unexpected results according to the accountability policy framework, i.e., test preparation activities and reputation-building strategies.

Competence-based Methodologies

The generalization of competence-based teaching is the most common practice reported in the interviews and can be partly understood as a response to PBA. Teachers and principals from all the schools report that they intensified the adoption of competence-based methods of evaluation and teaching "in order to align with the external test models" (Principal 1, School A). The adoption of a competence-based approach could be identified in the teaching as well as the evaluation methods. Teachers believe that this is powerfully driven by the external test, as a policy instrument which induces schools to introduce specific pedagogical changes without formally enforcing them:

> R: Our exams are based on instrumental competences, so we prepare the exams just like in Madrid's external test
>
> Q: And did you always do it this way?
>
> R: No, since the external test was developed by instrumental competences we began to prepare our internal exams and tests just like the ones done by the Community of Madrid. (Teacher 9, School D)

These practices appear to be relatively internalized, although some barriers emerge in schools with more traditional pedagogical approaches. In these cases the alignment to the external test is clearly an important factor explaining the adoption of competence-based teaching strategies instead of more traditional methods of teaching.

> My method is more traditional; I am still working on morphological analysis, sentence structure, kinds of words… all of this in not asked in the external test, so then for the sake of my students I decided to work more on the reading and the writing. This is good for my students but it is also because of the external test. (Principal 14, School F)

However, the consolidation of competence-based approaches can also be explained by other factors. Competence-based teaching has been formally introduced in Spain as a result of

international influences (Tiana, 2011) and has become an emerging *doxa* and a discursive consensus among teachers, although not necessarily translated into new teaching-learning practices (Bolivar, 2008). Therefore, the consolidation of competence-based teaching could be explained because it is considered to be a normative model of teaching and learning, which may be reinforced by the implementation of a competence-based external test.

Data Use for Improvement Purposes

The theory of action of accountability regulations expects school actors to use the data generated from the external test in order to improve instruction and implement corrective measures. Interestingly, the results of this research suggest that decoupling dynamics prevails when it comes to data use and analysis derived from the external test as a means to introduce improvement measures. In fact, the analysis of data, the design of improvement plans and their implementation is not always developed as defined in the current PBA framework. The engagement of schools in the process of data use and analysis differs among schools but is often understood merely as a legal and bureaucratic requirement. In fact, when asked for the process of definition and development of performance improvement plans, teachers and principals in schools with more innovative pedagogies tend to outline its mandatory character and dilute the importance of test results in their reflections about instructional strategies.

> We do it because they [the educational authorities] compel us to analyse and to expose it to the school board but we explain just this, that these tests are biased. (Principal 4, School C)

In these cases, performance data analysis for school improvement purposes is often implemented in a superficial manner, frequently understood just as a formal requisite and without being internalized into daily school practices, as suggested by one school inspector:

> Teachers are not at all used to performance indicators and all of this; you go there and well… What is done is merely playing to the gallery… I do not see this taking root, but it is true that this language is increasingly becoming more familiar. (Inspector 3)

In fact, some teachers and principals and even school inspectors, openly state that data-use requirements are perceived as "senseless" and do not help to generate profound processes of organizational reflexivity. Instead, they are seen as just "another section to fill in the annual report" (Inspector 2). Some schools argue that data practices and improvement plans are useless if they do not come with administrative support and additional resources to implement corrective measures and improvement plans.

> [The improvement plans] Do not serve to receive any support figure, so at the end of the day it is more *to play to the gallery* than to improve the results of the school. (Principal 8, School D)

> We have to do the improvement plan because of bad results but what we want is more support, the improvement plan will still be failing if we don't have more support and resources. (Teacher 3, School A)

However, the mandatory character of improvement plans implied its generalized adoption in schools, and the formal use of external test data as complementary information to identify aspects of school improvement is generalized, despite in a superficial manner and playing a secondary role.

> It is *more data* to use and take into consideration but it *cannot drive your improvement process*, it helps but is just some more information that you have. (Principal 19, School H)

> It makes me reflect on where we fail and work a little bit more on it, just like that. (Teacher 14, School G)

Interestingly, the results suggest that despite the fragmented and superficial use of external test data, most schools are increasingly using their internal evaluation results to implement and develop improvement plans. Their plans are more oriented to learning and teaching process approaches, independent of external performance indicators, especially in schools with more innovative approaches. Overall, the use of the external test data to introduce improvement measures in schools is in general superficially adopted, not intensively implemented and only partially internalized. Moreover, external test data are often seen as opposed to internal performance data, which are assumed to be more nuanced and appropriate to identify aspects of improvement, especially in schools with vulnerable students.

Test Preparation Activities

Teaching to the test is one of the most salient undesired results identified in the existing research on school accountability. In this study, the practices of test preparation are reported in all the interviews, independent of the school context, although these practices vary in terms of intensity, scope, and level of systematization. In general terms, all the school actors admit to preparing and training students for the external test, but they also stress that test preparation is not one of the core activities of their teaching task, neither is it part of the school mission and vision. Counterintuitively, the strategies of test preparation are reported as a certain normalized school practice beyond elements of social desirability. Nevertheless, the normalization of test preparation is often nuanced by considerations regarding the non-intensive character of such practices.

When analysing how and why these practices emerge, three main school factors are identified, namely pedagogical models, performance culture, and student profile. The pedagogical approach of schools can inhibit or increase the intensity and systematization of test

preparation. Schools with more innovative pedagogical approaches experience a certain tension between the logics of PBA, the strategies of test preparation and the educational approach of schools. In some cases, school actors reported that the innovative pedagogical methodologies "take time from teaching the subject" and "make impossible" to prepare for the test (Teacher 19, School H). Others suggest a more intrinsic contradiction between the innovative pedagogical models and the logics of testing:

> In general we don't give a lot of importance [to test preparation] because we are trying to advance other things, we are trying to have a more active methodology and this contradicts testing… but in the end it is a blend, we do not achieved teachers to untie from testing because they feel responsible for their students. (Principal 5, School C)

Schools with a more traditional and academic ethos tend to resort to test preparation activities with greater intensity and systematization. In these cases, test preparation is being more "integrated to the whole course and in the subject curricula" (Principal 10, School E) being "quite determining" and used in class "to teach content" and to know what content teachers should emphasize, or in the words of a principal "to know what needs to go over" (Principal 15, School G). Teaching to the test appears to be more frequent and intense in schools that are more performance-oriented, guided by concerns of fulfilment among families, teachers and principals, and especially intensive in those schools where excellence and academic results are central elements of the school identity. In these schools the test results could be seen as an external and internal threat for the school image and hence test preparation appears to be a proper strategy.

Another factor that conditions the adoption of test preparation strategies is the socio-economic background of students. Teachers and principals attending students in disadvantaged contexts suggest that test preparation and teaching to the test is a way to "familiarize students" with the model of the test in order to "avoid student stress and frustration" (Principal 1, School A; Teacher 3, School A). In these cases, the practices of test preparation are clearly linked with the pedagogical meaning frame previously identified in schools with more socio-emotional approaches. Here, test preparation appears to be less intense despite these not being residual practices.

Overall, the intersection of different school factors enables us to explain certain levels of intensity in practices of test preparation. For instance, the combination of pedagogic innovative approaches, well-being students, and a soft academic school culture serve to blur practices of test preparation. In contrast, schools with a high performative culture and more traditional pedagogies are more likely to develop more intensive practices of test preparation regardless of student population profiles.

Promotional and Marketing Strategies

A final approach to PBA policies is related to the promotional activities and the strategies of reputation building exerted by schools in a context of free school choice. Some of these practices are directly affected by the PBA regime, whereas others are more directly related to market dynamics and free-school choice arrangements.

The use of test results for promotional purposes is not a generalized response yet it is present both in public and private schools. These practices have been reported more intensively in schools with high levels of perceived market competition and a major academic school culture. In these schools, good performance in the external test and other performance data (mainly, the rates of promotion or the results in the university access exams, for those schools having secondary education levels) are used as a promotional and marketing strategy. This is especially true for school open days to attract students and improve the school position in a competitive market environment.

> If you have to compete for the same students you have to offer a value added, and one of these elements is all the numbers and data for families. (Principal 10, School E)

> In marketing terms it is always convenient to obtain good results because there is a lot of competition between schools. (Teacher 14, School G)

> Yes, yes. We inform parents about school results, logically. It is our dynamic, I mean, if we have obtained good results, why not to say it? This attracts student enrolment. (Teacher 9, School D)

Well-performing schools have a greater capacity to engage in competitive logics using performance data for school promotional activities. They can develop marketing strategies to better respond to first and second order competition dynamics, as reported in other research on education markets (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Maroy and Van Zanten, 2009). Specifically, second order competition takes place when schools compete not only to attract and maintain enrolment, but also to recruit a certain profile of students which in turn, could help enhance the schools' position in the school market by building their reputation:

> [in case of bad results] our reputation in the neighbourhood can get worse and this could affect us having fewer or *a worse kind of student.* (Principal 3, School B)

In this regard, the performance culture of families and their increasing role in the process of school choice seems to be a condition of possibility for schools to develop strategies of second order competition.

> Parents are very conservative when it comes to choosing the school. So when they visit schools, schools show the external tests results, the rate of promotion, the English level…. They are

> promoting themselves, that is to say, they *are being accountable, but they are selling the school*. And this is how, little by little, *they reach a certain profile of students.* (Inspector 1)

In contrast, schools that are not as academic or performance-oriented, as well as those with more innovative pedagogical approaches, tend to avoid the use of external test results as a strategy for school promotion. These schools tend to stress the "individualized" and "familiar" character of the school (Principal 18, School H) or other pedagogical aspects such as "active methodologies" and "personalized learning strategies" as their main selling points (Principal 4, School C). This does not mean that promotional activities are absent from these schools, but they do not rely on test performance or other related forms of academic achievement data.

The adoption of certain forms of school methodological innovations is, on many occasions, a way to improve the reputation of schools in the marketplace. This strategy is reported to be more frequent in schools with a higher subjective sense of competitive pressure, and is in fact activated in some schools as a response to market mechanisms. Such innovative measures that result from market pressures are often implemented superficially because they are not adopted for intrinsic pedagogical motivations, but as a strategy to enhance the school reputation, attract families and improve the school market position. They do not imply substantial changes regarding pedagogical approaches, teaching methods or instructional strategies.

> Well, we carried along by what was there. *It is all about trends*. Now it is bilingualism, before it was quality [management] and currently it is about [methodological] innovation. This is so, now if everybody innovates you cannot be left behind innovating. (Principal 15, School G)

In Madrid, a particular but generalized expression of this dynamic is the adhesion of schools to the official Spanish–English Bilingual Programme, which, for all school actors interviewed, was seen as an imperative imposed by the market dynamics of parental school choice and school competition for student enrolment. In fact, all the schools in this research participating in the bilingual programme acknowledged that participation in this project was mainly driven by competitive market pressures and as a differentiation strategy.

Altogether, the alignment between school practices and policy expectations are uneven in terms of internalization or superficial implementation according to different school features and contextual factors, including elements of school culture and context. Moreover, unexpected outcomes and instrumental school practices also emerge unevenly and are in some cases highly determined by the market dynamics of school choice and competition.

Conclusions

This research contributes to the academic debate on the enactment of accountability policy instruments and, more broadly, to the re-contextualization of these instruments in different educational settings. In general terms, the results suggest that the policy framework combining administrative and market-based accountability in Madrid has generated an ambiguous mandate of educational improvement which schools face in different intensities and translate into multiple practices. These range from superficial and instrumental responses to more significant and internalized school practices. More specifically, three main conclusions can be outlined in relation to the empirical results.

First, the results of this research contribute to a reflection of the complex relationship between administrative and market forms of accountability. The combination of administrative and market forms of accountability tend to generate dynamics of interdependence. Market forms of accountability are often tied to administrative tools of external evaluation, for example, when schools use performance indicators to improve their market position, or when families base their choices on school performance data. In parallel, schools are also aware of how their capacity to attract and retain students with a certain profile could help them enhance their performance and improve their reputation in the opinion of educational authorities and parents. However, the results also show that market forms of accountability are relatively autonomous and independent of administrative mechanisms. This is the case, for instance, in schools that adopt innovative methodologies to satisfy family preferences without necessarily taking into account learning standards, performance results or instructional improvement.

Overall, the relationship between market and administrative forms of accountability is ambivalent, and both mechanisms can generate superficial responses among school actors. The evidence provided in this regard also invites us to discuss the results of other studies which suggest that market logics tend to prevail over administrative mechanisms (e.g., Barbana et al., 2019; Maroy et al. 2020). The case study of Madrid indicates that administrative and market forms of accountability operate together to increase external pressures. Such external pressures are experienced unevenly in different schools and generate multiple school practices and responses. Moreover, because this process takes place in a highly competitive and segregated social context, it can, under certain conditions, reinforce practices of second order competition and dynamics of social closure in education. Future research should explore how, as a response to administrative and market demands, schools activate different logics of action that may generate undesirable policy outcomes in terms of equity.

Secondly, this research has shown that school actors develop complex interpretations of the PBA mandates, and can articulate critical, neutral and engaging understanding with different

dimensions of the same policy frameworks, sometimes even in contradictory forms. Hence, schools should be analysed as complex organizations where their members develop their own understanding of the policy environment according to certain collective and organizational conditions, but with great levels of discretion depending on subjective perceptions and personal dispositions. Policy precedents are especially relevant when it comes to making sense of policy, a fact that invites us to consider the historical component of sense-making and policy enactment and the accompanying methodological and research implications (as noted elsewhere, e.g., Coburn, 2004). The results presented here suggest that the fact that test results were previously published to promote school choice, conditioned the subjective interpretation of PBA among school actors. This was due to earlier forms of performative pressure which persisted even when the test results were no longer published. Indeed, as outlined by cognitive theories, policy enactment is a process of de-codification and re-signification of policy messages into previous cognitive frameworks. However, policy instruments also contribute to building and developing architectures of perception and interpretation. Therefore, accountability policies should not be analysed as mere regulatory arrangements, but as powerful policy instruments able to build and develop imaginaries and modulate school actors' perceptions and behaviours.

Hence, this study invites us to consider the importance of subjective factors in explaining the effects of policy programmes on human action. More specifically, the results of this research challenge the assumption of high-stakes systems as unique accountability designs able to generate performative pressures. In the case of Madrid, external pressures prevailed under a lower-stakes design because the perceptions and interpretations of school actors remained attached to the reputational concerns of testing in a quasi-market setting. Therefore, when analysing schools' external pressures under accountability regimes we should not only consider the formal policy designs (high-stakes vs low-stakes) but also the subjective perceptions of policy actors regarding such pressures, since, as noted by symbolic interactionism, "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (see Merton, 1995).

Third, the results confirm that schools adopt different strategies and practices in response to PBA, according to a complex interaction between different factors, namely, the schools' pedagogical approach, their performance culture, the student population and the subjective perception of external pressures. Indeed, the appropriations of PBA are highly determined by school culture and other contextual elements. Nonetheless, PBA has contributed to the generalization of some school practices in different settings. For instance, competence-based teaching is significantly internalized in the schools studied. This is largely due to the enforcing capacity of the external test, but also because teachers assume this approach is desirable and appropriate. However, instrumental practices, such as test preparation activities, also emerge and are generalized despite uneven levels of systematization and intensity. In contrast,

promotional activities are more unevenly adopted and are highly reliant on a school's reputation and perceived competitive pressure. Data use is another of the expected responses to PBA, but it appears to be implemented fragmentally and superficially. In many cases this simply meets legal requirements without being internalized into everyday school life. This is partly because most school actors are hesitant regarding the efficacy and fairness of accountability policy instruments, which is something that reinforces responses that decouple from the accountability mandate.

The results of this research suggest that the decoupling argument partly applies in the case of Madrid, especially with respect to practices of data use. Schools tend to adopt superficial changes without altering the formal structures and instructional dynamics when school actors do not believe in the efficacy and fairness of certain policy instruments. Moreover, the back and forth dynamics regarding the accountability regime, i.e., its low policy sedimentation and coherence, may have contributed to such superficial responses. In this sense, the absence of a stable and a formal scheme of incentives and sanctions, which is characteristic of the erratic trajectory of NPM measures in Spanish public administration, also favours school actors' misbelief in the accountability system and contributes to the prevalence of decoupling dynamics and superficial responses.

This research aims to improve our understanding of accountability policy enactments in different school settings and has important policy and research implications beyond the case study discussed. In terms of policy implications, this research provides new evidence on the prevailing gap between policy expectations and actual policy enactments. Teachers and principals are key policy actors in the enactment of education policies at the school level. Hence, the failure or success of education reforms relies heavily on the way school actors understand the principles, goals and mechanisms of the policies, tools and instruments of the reforms. Therefore, taking into account the voices and perceptions of teachers and principals in education reform is a critical point, or at least a necessary condition, to favour its success. Reform processes should also take into account the fact that school actors are not exempt from misunderstanding policy messages or reinterpreting policy mandates in instrumental terms. This is one reason why policy makers should consider non-expected results and prevent potential undesirable policy outcomes, especially when these outcomes can have equity effects.

Regarding the research implications of this case study, at least two main issues should be stressed. First, this research reflects on the importance of policy precedents, which should be considered to a greater extent when analysing contemporary forms of policy enactment. This implies that the chronological and historical dimension of policy process should be taken into account in the methodological designs of implementation and enactment research. The

importance of policy precedents is closely related to the subjective dimension of the policy enactment because the pre-existing experiences of policy actors regarding specific policy instruments determine its interpretation. Therefore, another research implication of this work is related to the need for greater consideration of the subjective dimension of policy enactment. Human action can be understood not only as the response to objective conditions of reality, but also as the response to the meaning given to such conditions (Merton, 1948). This research has also shown that the adoption and enactment stages of the policy process are intimately related and cannot be artificially disentangled. Therefore, a final research implication is the indication that a proper policy analysis requires a more holistic approach to iteratively address policy adoption and policy enactment as two sides of the same coin.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has analysed the recontextualisation of SAWA as a global education reform model in a regional context. This final chapter aims to discuss the main results and conclude with some final thoughts. The chapter is organised in the following sections. First, a brief overview and discussion of the main results are provided. Second, the general conclusions are presented, according to intrinsic and extrinsic case conclusions. Third, the chapter follows with a short commentary on the contributions of this thesis concerning the main debates within the field of SAWA research and more broadly within the political sociology of education policy. The limitations and future perspectives are addressed next, and the chapter closes by highlighting the main implications of this thesis for both policy and research.

Overview and Discussion of the Main Results

This thesis has analysed recent SAWA reforms in Madrid, Spain, from a multi-scalar perspective, using a diverse toolkit of empirical and theoretical approaches to analyse their policy instrumentation, their main impacts in the local education spaces and their diverse enactments at the school level. A brief summary of the main results is provided below, according to the different levels defined in the analytical model.

The Policy Adoption and Reform Trajectory of SAWA Policies in Madrid

The first two articles of the compilation address the process of policy adoption of SAWA reforms as a global policy solution and their particular translation in the context of Madrid. These articles focus on the macro level of analysis, aiming to understand how and why accountability reforms have been recontextualised in the Spanish context, with a particular focus on Madrid. Both papers provide complementary results using different theoretical perspectives. The first article focuses on a comparison between the reform trajectories in Madrid and Catalonia, for which the multiple streams framework is applied as the main analytical device. The second article, which provides a deeper focus on the case of Madrid, further develops the policy adoption process and the reform trajectories from the point of view of the policy instruments approach.

Both articles are concurrent in the main results. First, the results suggest that Madrid adopted the SAWA reform with a double and encompassing rationale, which combines the main components of the conservative modernisation reform agenda based on a counterintuitive balance between the neoliberal and neoconservative values applied in the field of education. The neoconservative approach was prominent in the problematisation of the educational challenges that the reform aimed to address, but it was also an important ideological source in the first developments of the reform process. Conservative actors suggested that Spanish education was under a crisis of quality learning and performance levels due to the comprehensive approach

that dominated the education system since the beginning of the 1990s. From this point of view, social-democratic approaches to education reform represented the main cause of an allegedly educational crisis, which on the behalf of equity had undermined the values of excellence, effort and discipline in schools[61].

Under this diagnostic frame, and using the extended regional political competences in education, the regional government of Madrid started a process of education reform explicitly aimed at reverting the social-democratic approach to educational governance that prevailed at the national level. In order to do so, one of the first measures adopted was the implementation of the external standardised tests, with the goal of identifying the level of students and increasing learning standards. In the first phase, a general improvement plan was defined, and learning standards were established. Then external tests were used to control the contents of the curriculum and improve student performance according to such standards. In addition, the external test was used to inform families about the schools' average performance in order to enhance transparency and foster parental school choice. The different but complementary uses of the testing instruments synthetised the core ideas of the conservative modernisation educational agenda, in which both 'standards' and 'markets' were combined as the main policy technologies.

A common result of both articles is the instrumental and multiple uses given to the PISA results and to the OECD recommendations, which are considered international sources of reference and legitimation. To a great extent, the instrumental use of PISA evolved together with the trajectory of the accountability reform in Madrid. Initially, the national PISA results were used to support the diagnostic frame of the conservative actors, suggesting a learning crisis due to the educational model promoted by the social-democratic educational reforms. The OECD recommendations were also selectively used as a policy legitimation device to justify the adoption of a pregiven reform agenda, which was deployed in specific measures, such as the implementation of an external and standardised test, the dissemination of its results and the promotion of broader parental school choice and competitive dynamics in the school system. Later on, the Madrilenian PISA results were presented as evidence of the success of the education reforms of the regional government, despite evident problems of causation. In the last phase of the reform, the PISA test was used as a technical reference to emulate in the large-scale

[61] This point of view was shared among conservative actors at the national and regional level. Indeed, the conservative party had intended to revert the social-democratic reforms at the national level in 2002, with the quality education law (LOCE). However, the implementation of this conservative reform was interrupted in 2004, with the unexpected victory of the social-democratic party in the general elections, which was marked by both the terrorist attacks in Madrid and the erratic communication management of said attacks.

assessment system. Since 2015, the regional test has adopted a competence-based approach inspired by PISA and other international large-scale assessments.

Another important result regarding the macro level of analysis is the important role of multi-scalar dynamics in the policy process, particularly in decentralised school systems, such as the Spanish one. From the point of view of the global-local scales, the results of this thesis suggest that international policy models are increasingly influential in national and regional spaces. However, the results presented in the first two articles of the compilation suggest, as other researchers indicate (cf. Bonal & Tarabini, 2013), that there is no a top-down linear influence. Instead, local actors play a key role in recontextualising global policy models, tending to instrumentally use the policy recommendations of IOs and the results of ILSAs to advance domestic reform agendas within a bounded administrative and political context.

Beyond global-local dynamics, this thesis has also identified and analysed other multi-scalar policy dynamics related to the national and subnational spaces, which in Spain appear to be contentious and determining (cf. Engel, 2008). In this regard, the conservative government in Madrid started an educational governance reform as a response to the governance model that dominated at the national scale, with a predominantly social-democratic approach. As acknowledged by several actors involved in the policy process, the SAWA reforms in Madrid were a strategy to advance and experiment with a conservative reform model that was not possible to enact at the national level. In this sense, some authors (cf. Ramírez Aísa, 2016) have suggested that Madrid acted as a policy laboratory within the Spanish educational context. The culmination of the decentralisation process in the education sector in year 1999–2000 was a condition to advance such a reform model in the regional level as a contrast to the social-democratic legacy of the education governance approach prevailing in Spain. Paradoxically, the conservative party, traditionally more reluctant to decentralise key governmental competences, took advantage of decentralisation to advance its own agenda at the regional scale.

The orientation of the education reform in Madrid was partially possible due to the policy work of emerging advocacy actors, such as the FAES foundation and its policy networks, as other research has noticed (cf. Olmedo & Santa Cruz, 2013). Indeed, both articles stress the key role of this foundation, especially in the dissemination and framing of the political discourse calling for the imperative need of conservative educational reform. When it comes to the practical adoption and the specific translation in the context of Madrid, the policy leadership of President Esperanza Aguirre—not to mention her political and personal background and individual policy preferences— appears as a key determining factor to explain the approach and trajectory of the reform. In fact, the policy discontinuities identified in the last phase of the reform, analysed in the second article, could be partially attributed to her resignation. In particular, the absence of

strong political leadership backing a certain education policy orientation seems to have privileged the role of mid-range policymakers and officials. These actors assumed more pragmatic positions, which aimed to find more consensual policy solutions regarding accountability policies and other school governance regulations. This trend applies particularly to the policy of transparency and the dissemination of the results of different schools.

The second article also highlights other factors that explain the unexpected policy discontinuity regarding the accountability policy framework and how these factors are politically, culturally and technically situated. The interviewed officials of the regional government stressed two main political factors to explain policy discontinuity. First, the Post-Aguirre administration viewed low-stakes accountability as more of a consensual model within the school community and considered it more appropriate after a long period of contestation and social unrest due to the educational reforms enacted during the first decade of the 2000s and the budget cuts associated with the 2008 financial crisis. Second, the policymakers of the regional government with a more technocratic orientation assumed the need to align the test with the new national policy framework and the evaluative designs defined by international large-scale assessments. When it comes to cultural factors, several academics and policy stakeholders have stressed the key role of the strong public administration culture in Spain. According to them, external evaluation in Spain is seen for most school actors as a form of administrative control and a sign of distrust towards the teaching profession. In this sense, a model of accountability seems to find important difficulties to sediment without the complicity of teachers and the mutual understanding of all the actors involved in the accountability relationship. Finally, regarding the technical factors behind policy discontinuity, the early versions of the standardised tests had important technical weaknesses in terms of items design and long-term analysis and comparisons. These issues implied a certain discredit of the assessment system in the academic community and facilitated a change of both the evaluative approach and the design of the test.

SAWA Reforms under Market Environments: Analysing the Schools' Logics of Action

The third article of the compilation analyses the impact of SAWA policies in the local competitive arena. Accountability and school autonomy are analysed here as part of a broader reform agenda that under the tenets of the post-bureaucratic governance reinforced quasi-market arrangements in the education system, inducing schools to compete for their student enrolment under free school choice schemes in a diversified 'market' of school providers. This article analyses how schools face and respond to different market competitive dynamics using the concept of 'schools' logics of action' as an analytical and empirical device. First, the paper explores the exogenous and endogenous factors involved in different schools' logics of action, as defined by Maroy and van Zanten (2009), and shows how these logics of action are to a great

extent contingent on the schools' position in the school market. Second, the article analyses how schools with different logics of action deal with interdependent competition in a context of school autonomy and external accountability.

This paper identifies a set of structural factors related to different logics of action. Briefly, the findings suggest that the capacity of schools to develop different organisational and instructional strategies as a response to market pressure differs according to structural and relational factors of an endogenous and exogenous nature. These factors include the student population of educational institutions, the perception of competition and the external reputation of schools within the local education market.

This third article identifies different school responses to external pressures according to diverse logics of action. Schools with adaptive logics tend to use their margins of organisational and pedagogical autonomy to adapt the educational approach to their students' characteristics (e.g., inclusive pedagogical approaches with a remedial and compensatory orientation). In contrast, schools with tactician logics of action are more prone to engage in practices of internal segmentation to deal with student diversity and heterogeneity, as well as adopting pedagogical innovative methodologies, in order to improve their capacity to attract and retain middle-class students. Entrepreneurial schools are those who adopt promotional strategies more actively, including marketing, advertising as well as the use of the performance results in the external test as a way to build their external reputation. They are also very active in test preparation activities. Finally, schools with a monopolistic logic of action avoid adopting extensive promotional activities and test preparation strategies. In contrast, they engage in progressive and expressive innovative methodologies beyond academic approaches. This research has shown how schools in different positions in the LEM are engaged in competitive dynamics with different responses and SAWA enactments according to their student population and external reputation. This result has an important impact in terms of equity as far as local education spaces are more vertically structured and schools tend to specialise their offer in particular educational market segments.

Finally, this article highlights how schools with different logics of action tend to develop different responses to competitive interdependence under diverse mechanisms in tension—that is, emulation vs. differentiation, innovation vs. tradition and segmentation vs. accommodation.

The Enactment of Accountability Instruments on the Ground: Between Alignment and Decoupling

The fourth article of this compilation analyses the interpretations and translations of accountability policy instruments at the school level combining enactment theories with neoinstitutionalist approaches, focusing on the concept of policy alignment and decoupling.

More specifically, in this article, I have addressed how school actors in different contexts make sense of the accountability mandate and translate it into diverse but specific school practices with particular levels of policy alignment or decoupling between the expectations of the policy framework and the actual practices at the school level.

Regarding the interpretation of accountability policy instruments, I have identified a general vague positive assumption that can be labelled a 'positive sceptical position', which basically suggests that external accountability policy instruments are seen as a lesser evil and as necessary to ensure the accomplishment of certain standards. However, this argument is broadly surpassed by critical arguments based on four main meaning frames. I suggest that such meaning frames are mediated by how school actors experience external accountability pressures between administrative and market logics. Different in nature, such pressures are experienced unevenly among teachers and principals according to school level factors, including subjective elements (e.g., the subjective sense of competition) and more structural factors (e.g., the location of the school or the profile of the student population).

In this interpretative framework, the thesis states that the administrative forms of pressure appear to be uneven among schools and school actors. In general, public schools report more administrative pressure than private institutions, which tend to feel more pressure from the school owners than from public authorities. In public schools especially, such pressures are expressed through the hierarchical relationship between school inspectors and principals, who in turn tend to feel more administrative pressure than teachers do. Teachers tend to define such pressures as self-imposed, which appear to be expressed in terms of professional reputation. Interestingly, when school actors feel that they do not receive sufficient administrative support, they are prone to perceive administrative accountability as a source of blame and as a form of external control.

Market pressures are also inconsistent across schools, although they are generalised and often appear together with administrative pressures. These pressures are often related to reputational concerns in terms of school image in an open school choice environment. The market pressures associated with the accountability regulatory framework are broadly influenced by disrupting policy precedents. In the case of Madrid, the publication of the external test results in a context of free school choice and relatively high levels of school diversification (especially in terms of school providers) created important competitive and performative pressures in the recent past. Even though the results of the test are no longer officially published, performance pressures have their own inertia and are still very much present in the imaginaries of numerous school actors. While the finalisation of the policy of transparency has contributed to a certain mitigation of the levels of market pressure in some schools, emerging informal channels of

information among families have generated new forms of market pressure. In high performing schools, for which parents have high academic expectations, market pressure is related to the preservation of internal and external school legitimacy. In contrast, in low performing schools, the pressure is experienced as a result of not being actively chosen. In these schools, the relationship between testing and choice is described as a loop that reinforces school stigmatisation.

This thesis also addresses how schools react to the accountability mandate with more or less substantial responses, analysing the policy alignment or decoupling dynamics within four main school practices. In this regard, the article analyses the enhancement of competence-based approaches and the promotion of data use practices as expected policy outcomes within the accountability regulations. Regarding the competence-based approaches, the paper highlights a salient alignment between the schools' evaluative methods and the design of the external testing instrument. These practices should be understood not only as the result of the enforcement capacity of the external test but also as the result of other dynamics, for instance, the generalised normative consensus among teachers regarding competence-based teaching as a desirable model to follow. In contrast, data use practices based on the external test results are only adopted in a superficial and ceremonial way, decoupling school practices from accountability policy expectations.

Teaching to the test is reported in the fieldwork of this thesis as a generalised practice associated with the accountability policy framework. Although being a generalised practice, the levels of systematisation and the intensity of such practices differ across schools according to the school ethos (innovative-traditional), their performative orientation and their student population. In contrast, marketing activities were reported as a less generalised practice, although they were present in both public and private schools and were more reported in high performing schools involved in second-order competition dynamics.

General Conclusions

This section presents the main conclusions of the thesis in the three levels of analysis according to intrinsic- and extrinsic-case conclusions. Regarding the macro level of analysis and the extrinsic-case conclusions, this thesis suggests that the dissemination and translation of global education policies in regional contexts should be addressed from a nuanced and multi-directional perspective in order to understand the complexities of different policy actors and practices in multiple and permeable scales. Deterministic and top-down approaches to the international diffusion and dissemination of policy models appear to be flawed. Instead, a more constructionist approach helps us to better understand the multiple and reinforcing dynamics

across policy scales and actors when it comes to understanding the translation of global policy models. In the case of Madrid, international policy models served as a discursive and normative frame to problematise the need of reform and justify the selection of particular accountability policy instruments. Interestingly, the reform initiative was taken from the regional scale in opposition to the national education reform model, as it instrumentally and selectively used different international references.

In Madrid, ideological factors were important to understand the selection and development of different accountability policy instruments under the conservative modernisation agenda, which skilfully combined market-oriented solutions with conservative approaches to education reform. Emerging private actors played a key role in this process, with the FAES foundation being one of the most important reform advocates in Madrid. In parallel, both individual political leadership and policy entrepreneurship also appear to be critical factors for understanding the particular selection and use of accountability instruments. However, the administrative tradition prevailed as a hindering factor when political leadership declined, particularly regarding decisions on the transparency and public dissemination of the test results. Nevertheless, the administrative accountability policy instruments endured together with school choice policies and limited forms of school autonomy.

Key elements of the post-bureaucratic educational governance approach have been consolidated in Madrid with uneven but relevant effects concerning how schools behave in the local spaces of competition. In this regard, this thesis has shown in the meso level of analysis that schools in different market positions have diverse capacities, attitudes and dispositions, and they respond to market accountability pressures accordingly. School autonomy policies and accountability instruments make an impression within local education spaces, generating increasingly competitive dynamics among schools. However, education providers experience such pressures differently and are not equally prone to respond to external competition; consequently, they adopt diverse logics of action to behave in the marketplace. Following previous classifications (cf. van Zanten, 2009; Maroy & van Zanten, 2009; Ball & Maroy, 2009), this thesis has identified and analysed different logics of action that are vertically structured according to the local hierarchy of schools in the education market. Schools appear to be vertically specialised according to their local conditions, challenging the role of education as a cohesive and levelling instrument and reinforcing its reproductive functions.

The micro level of analysis has addressed the enactment of accountability policy instruments at the school level. The results of this thesis suggest that market and administrative forms of accountability are mutually reinforcing and tend to function simultaneously with logics of interdependence, resulting in increasing external pressures. These external pressures are not

univocal but rather ambivalent, and schools experience them unevenly and without a clear idea of what are the concrete policy sources of such pressures. At the same time, most of the schools analysed tend to address external pressures with strategies based on superficial responses instead of substantial instructional and pedagogical changes. The results of this research reinforce the idea, as an extrinsic-case conclusion, that we cannot take for granted the implementation of policy instruments; rather, we should consider how policy actors interpret and translate policy technologies in their immediate institutional realities.

The thesis has emphasised the cognitive dimension of policy, showing how school actors have their own agency when it comes to understanding and translating different accountability tools and policy mandates. In this regard, principals and teachers could even decouple school practices from policy expectations when they do not share the adequacy and/or fairness of particular accountability policy instruments. At this point, the case of Madrid has shown that policy precedents play a key role as a mediating factor in determining how school actors make sense of accountability policy tools. Therefore, school actors' perceptions appear to be a modulator of how accountability policy instruments are enacted on the ground. However, this relationship is bidirectional in the sense that accountability tools can also shape and modulate the perceptions and behaviours of school actors by means of the external pressure of policy demands.

Contribution to SAWA research

The present dissertation has contributed to the policy studies on school governance reforms—with a focus on school autonomy and accountability—in different ways. First, it has developed and applied the notion of policy instrumentation to better understand not only the reasons and motivations associated with specific instrument choices but also their effects (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007). In a similar line of inquiry, the thesis has addressed the relationships of different modes of accountability—market-oriented and administrative-based—and the particular impacts of this combination at the school and education market levels. The thesis suggests that administrative and market forms of accountability are interdependent in their effects and impacts. Schools use administrative accountability instruments to build their reputation in the market; school actors are very aware of how the market position of the school and the choice dynamics of families will affect their capacity to improve the school's performance within administrative-oriented accountability systems. Although the relationship among these different forms of accountability is not new, this thesis contributes to the scholarly field by making explicit its particular impact and interdependence dynamics.

Second, the thesis highlights the importance of analysing accountability policy instruments in relation to other governance-related policies—instead of as isolated instruments. In this regard, the thesis has analysed the impact of accountability policy instruments in relation to school choice schemes and school autonomy policies. I argue that accountability mechanisms cannot be analysed separately from these governance arrangements. In Madrid, the combination and triangulation of limited forms of school autonomy within a relatively diverse school provision, broad forms of parental school choice and administrative mechanisms of accountability make a shift towards a post-bureaucratic education model possible.

Third, the thesis has addressed how the hybridisation of these policies influences not only the internal dynamics within schools but also the interdependences of educational providers in the local spaces of competition, making more acute the vertical differentiation of school systems (cf. Lubienski, 2006).

Contribution to Other Sociological Debates

At this point in the discussion, I would like to reflect on what are the main contributions of this thesis to the political sociology of education policy.

From the macro level of analysis, this thesis has addressed the local recontextualisation of SAWA reforms as a global policy model, thus contributing to the debate of education policy reforms as global phenomenon with local translations. In this debate, some have argued that we are witnessing a global convergence of international policy models building an emerging world culture that has its particular manifestations in the field of education (Meyer et al., 1997; Benavot et al., 1991). Other perspectives suggest that global education reforms are taking place worldwide as a response to processes of accumulation and legitimisation within capitalist societies involving dynamics of political and economic interest (Dale, 1982; 2000; 2005). Complementing such macro approaches, some theories have emphasised divergence trends, focusing on how global education policies differ when they are adopted and recontextualised locally (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Beyond the convergence-divergence debate, this thesis has analysed the local recontextualisation of SAWA as a global reform model and provides evidence on how local actors and governments are increasingly adopting global policy solutions and discourses. They adapt them to a given situated context, bonded by a set of political, cultural and institutional elements, which determine specific and 'vernacular' (cf. Maroy et al., 2017) local translations. This thesis supports the idea of policy discourses and instruments being increasingly globalised, although its calibration and instrumentation remains sensible to contextual factors.

At the meso and micro level of analysis, an analogous debate exists. Some neoinstitutionalist approaches stress how schools as organisations are becoming more and more similar through the mechanism of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In contrast, enactment and sense-making perspectives (Ball et al., 2011) put a greater emphasis on how the contextual specificities of schools determine different interpretations and translations of education policy prerogatives. This thesis, however, presents some evidence suggesting that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

The neoinstitutionalist approach has theorised that when facing contradictory policy mandates or external policy pressures, organisations tend to decouple their formal structures from the specific practices. At this point, I see a certain encounter between isomorphic dynamics and diverging enactments. I argue that isomorphic dynamics may take place at the level of the formal structures, discourses and myths, meanwhile the specific practices remain quite sensible to be readapted and resignified according to contextual specificities. I provide some examples from the qualitative fieldwork to support my argument, which is also supported by the questionnaire data. Some school responses are quite generalised, particularly the test preparation activities and the open day events (with the exception of the monopolistic school). Schools seem to converge in adopting such practices following a *mimetic* mechanism. Schools also converged in (superficially) adopting practices of data use through improvement plans because of their mandatory character under a *coercive* mechanism. Finally, most teachers declared to perform competence-based approaches to education as a response to a *normative* mechanism associated to a specific ideal of professionalism. However, the motivations and the specific adoption of such practices were not equal in all the schools. For example, some schools aligned the learning standards to the teaching strategies; meanwhile, others just trained students to be familiarised with the test format. In fact, in the meso level of analysis, this thesis has outlined the conditions that allow some schools to adopt a given logic of action and, hence, to embrace a more or less isomorphic approach within the group of schools sharing particular conditions. In this regard, we cannot assume a flat or broad argument of convergence among countries, organisations or individuals, but we need to identify the factors explaining distinct convergence and/or divergence trends of individual and collective action within and between groups and organisations.

Limitations and future perspectives

Along with the contributions of this thesis, some limitations should be stressed as well. The thesis has opted to adopt a predominantly qualitative methodological approach in order to conduct a study combining both descriptive and explanatory approaches. Such qualitative strategy helped to explain the reform process and identify the underlying mechanisms beyond

specific policy impacts. However, because of the qualitative nature of this methodological strategy, causal claims cannot be made, nor can the results be generalised to other policy contexts.

A second limitation of the thesis is that it does not analyse the role of families in the changing dynamics of education governance under post-bureaucratic models. In the meso and the micro level of analysis, this thesis opted to focus on the role of school actors on the supply side— this is, teachers, principals and school inspectors. However, the research process highlighted how families have an increasing role as a school actor under quasi-market school systems, especially as an emerging account holder in market forms of accountability.

A third limitation is the self-reporting nature of the data collected in the meso and micro levels of analysis. The interviews with teachers and principals, as well as the questionnaire responses, provide information about what teachers and principals think and declare to do. The thesis, however, did not collect direct observations on what is done in classrooms, school meetings, open door events—only declarative accounts on what the teachers say is done.

To address these limitations, I suggest some future lines of research. First, I would like to complement the results of my thesis in the micro and meso level of analysis by adopting ethnographic research approaches relaying on observational techniques of classroom practices and school meetings. Although observations have been conducted as a complementary source of information to be triangulated with interviews and other secondary sources (e.g., school documents, improvement plans and school websites), these techniques have not been conducted and analysed systematically. Furthermore, I would like to conduct research on the role of families not only as account holders concerning school choice but also as internal school actors within the school community.

Comparative approaches on the adoption and recontextualisation of SAWA reforms in countries with different administrative traditions is also a promising line of research that can contribute to compensating for the problems of generalisation. Making comparisons allows us to identify and analyse how different factors across countries intervene in the specific adoption and enactment of accountability policies.

Another line of inquiry that I would like to address in future research is the potential of SAWA reforms as equity-oriented policy solutions. I have analysed a context where SAWA reforms were enacted under a market-oriented approach; however, the possibilities of calibrating and enacting SAWA reforms to improve school experiences and the learning outcomes of disadvantaged students are still understudied.

Research Implications

This research has important implications for policy research. It has addressed the recontextualisation of SAWA policies in Madrid by looking at different stages and phases of the policy process, particularly the adoption, behavioural impacts and enactment of accountability policy instruments in a context of limited autonomy and wide parental school choice. By doing so, I have tried to show the nuances and complexities of the reform. Therefore, the first salient research implication is the need to address the policy process from a holistic and integrative point of view. Looking at policy adoption alone only allows us to explain a segmented part of the policy process. Policy studies should analyse the phases of adoption and enactment as two phases of the same object of study, also including previous phases (e.g., agenda setting and policy formulation) and posterior stages (e.g., evaluation and recalibration). Of course, doing research is a matter of delimitating the object of study, which implies the need to determine what is included in our studies. However, including different phases of the policy circle in the study of the same policy will produce a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

The second research implication deriving from this thesis is that we cannot assume either a linear or a flat understanding of policy. Policy researchers are often tempted to highlight what works and what does not work in order to offer solutions and recommendations for policymakers. However, as the critics of school effectiveness has shown (cf. Slee & Weiner, 1998) there are no magic solutions, and what works for some may not work for others. Of course, this premise might not be appealing for reformers, but policy research should use more realistic approaches. They should try to overcome generalist policy observations on solutions and best practices to further focus on for whom a given policy works, for whom not and under what circumstances policies have particular impacts. Indeed, this research has shown that not all the schools react and respond similarly to the same policy stimuli and regulations; therefore, different impacts and consequences should be considered when designing and implementing policies.

A third implication for research is the importance of the cognitive dimension of policy. Even though this observation is not new, it appears to be especially relevant when studying policies and reforms in the field of school governance, which are ultimately oriented towards changing organisational, collective and individual relationships, behaviours and expectations among educational actors. Exploring what school actors understand about specific policy mandates, as well as how they interpret and translate them, is a precondition for gaining a better understanding of how diverse policies operate in different circumstances. This thesis has also demonstrated that the cognitive dimension is particularly influenced by the previous experiences of school actors regarding other precedent policy initiatives. This is an important research

implication and suggests the need of addressing policy studies from longitudinal and historical points of view. In this sense, the analysis of the policy trajectories should not only include the formal changes and evolutions of policy initiatives but also show how such changes have affected the perceptions and actions of the involved agents.

The last but equally important implication regards the role of scale in policymaking and the challenges this carries for policy researchers. Policy is tailored in local contexts with multiple influences from different policy scales. International references have long been used in Madrid to justify the adoption of accountability policy instruments; reference societies were selectively used and the recommendations of IOs appeared as a key reference for policy. Interestingly, the education reform in Madrid was developed in the regional scale in opposition to the reform model consolidated at the national scale, selectively using international references and models. Therefore, this thesis reinforces the idea that 'scale' should not be only treated as simple level of analysis or implementation but as a constituent part of the policy work in which actors 'actively (re)construct and strategically use scale in order to achieve particular goals' (Papanastasiou, 2017, p. 1060). This observation should makes us to better reflect on how we address policy research in somewhere between methodological nationalism and methodological globalism. The meso space appears to be a promising standpoint to overcome the biases of statist and globalist approaches to policy research.

Recommendations for Policy

This thesis has elucidated the development enactment and impacts of a particular model of school accountability in Madrid and different related policies (i.e., school autonomy measures and school choice schemes). The different articles included in this compilation demonstrates how an education system within a bureaucratic tradition can adopt different policy instruments that can challenge important dynamics within the system, moving Madrid towards a post-bureaucratic education model. This shift was not a sudden and radical policy change but the result of the slow sedimentation of different tools and policy devices. The education reform addressed in this thesis was not the result of a legislative debate and consultation process involving stakeholders' participation; it was a more discreet process. Although the adoption of the external test, the school autonomy plans and the free school choice scheme generated a vivid public debate, these substantive changes did not take the form of a new education reform act.

Instead, these changes were promulgated in the form of executive decrees, implying fewer policy and political discussion regarding the design, purpose and mechanisms attached to the policy instruments in question. A policymaking process characterised by little transparency risks resulting in a lack of social legitimation, which in turn may have consequences at the level

of acceptance and policy enactment, not to mention the damages in terms of institutional trust. Accountability policy instruments and school autonomy are not neutral devices and need broad participatory approaches to deal with a complex policymaking process, in which it is crucial to problematise who is accountable for what, under what consequences and with what kind of potential impacts. Any type of policy, but especially an accountability one, can gain adequacy, coherence and legitimacy if the design of the policy instruments is shared and different voices are considered.

Publicly and politically problematising accountability policies also involve looking at the non-intended effects and to their potentially harmful impacts, especially in terms of equity. Regarding the case of Madrid, some concerns are apparent. SAWA policies were adopted in Madrid with the objective of raising the learning standards and improving transparency as well as parental school choice. In parallel, school autonomy was seen as a way of diversifying the school offer in an already differentiated school system. However, the model of school autonomy was enacted with a limited conception of autonomy, which gave schools the possibility of joining specific predefined educational programs. In this sense, school autonomy has not generally acted in Madrid as a strategy to adapt the pedagogical approach of schools to students' needs or contextual specificities but as a way of externally differentiating schools in the marketplace. Additionally, the use of administrative accountability to set the learning standards was adopted initially in a bureaucratic approach as a way to control the curriculum, and it implied a narrow and 'back to basics' approach to education. However, the case of Madrid shows how accountability policy instruments can be used in multiple ways. In this sense, the test was also used to enhance a post-bureaucratic governance approach. By publicly disseminating the results to improve school transparency and parental school choice, it was expected to govern school practices at a distance through data gathering and dissemination instruments. In an already segregated and differentiated school system, this approach to SAWA might have had salient damaging implications in terms of equity, especially in terms of limiting the educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged schools, students and families. Indeed, this thesis has shown that post-bureaucratic governance can intensify the vertical specialisation of schools. The most disadvantaged schools have adopted remedial and compensatory approaches, with a sort of inclusive specialisation in the local market. In contrast, schools with more fluent students adopted active competitive strategies to improve or maintain their market position, which allowed them to focus on easier-to-teach students.

A salient policy implication of this thesis is the need to reconsider alternative approaches to SAWA arrangements. School autonomy should be recalibrated to attend students with educational needs instead of making the school systems more internally differentiated. However, education policy and school reforms should not be considered from a simplistic or

dualistic point of view. We need to reflect on school autonomy policies surpassing antagonist approaches (i.e., differentiation vs. standardisation) and consider locally situated and realistic solutions. In this regard, I would like to resume the use of the term 'equivalence' in education policy, as other scholars suggest in the field of territorial schooling planning (cf. Bonal & Zancajo, 2019). The notion of equivalence refers to particular attributes that may be different in nature but equal in value. This approach seems particularly appropriate in the search for more balanced and fairer forms of school autonomy. Indeed, addressing different learning and social conditions from uniformity seems to be ill-suited, but there is also the risk of diversity easily shifting towards inequality. At this point, accountability needs to act as a control mechanism oriented to equity instead of solely student performance.

A balance between autonomy and accountability is also needed to improve the conditions of those who most suffer from social inequalities. Thus, accountability should contemplate alternative approaches and not exclusively focus on school performance but also on processes and equity outcomes, involving emerging mechanisms and underestimated actors (i.e., students, communities and local institutions). Such approaches should look for compromises between alternative (i.e., participative and social) and traditional (i.e., administrative and professional) forms of accountability. Some scholars have called for 'intelligent accountabilities' (notice the plural). Including the voices of community and school actors, combining internal and external mechanisms of evaluation, and promoting trust relationships among accountability actors may allow the emergence of learning and cooperation dynamics among schools, instead of competition and mistrust (Sahlberg, 2010; Lingard, 2009; Ehren, 2019).

Yet more research is needed to better understand how different SAWA policies are being enacted in diverse contexts and how they generate uneven impacts between and within school systems. Improving the knowledge of what are the main conditions that contribute to policies triggering particular mechanisms and generating different outcomes might enhance the adequacy, coherence and fairness of future policy initiatives.

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