



National curriculum policy in Norway and Brazil: translations of the global accountability logic

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Abstract

This paper addressed in what ways national curriculum policy in Norway and Brazil adopted the global accountability logic of which OECD and other international organizations are proponents. It borrowed from an institutional logics perspective to explain the complexity found within the accountability logic across these two nation-states. The method used was thematic analysis of the national curriculum policy. The findings revealed that national curriculum policy is informed by the international context, but translated within national contexts. Norway elaborated the accountability logic to encompass multiple aspects of this logic that reinforced each other to create a cohesive policy. In Brazil, tensions between different social groups resulted in a curriculum policy with contradictory aspects of the accountability logic. The translations of the global accountability logic reflected the context-specific features of each country and illustrated both homogeneity and heterogeneity that still exists in different educational contexts.

Keywords: national curriculum policy, accountability, institutional logics, comparison

1 Introduction

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), facilitated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has been a driver for national educational reforms with increasing accountability (Grek, 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2003). Powerful international organizations have written policy documents with recommendations for action, and promoted initiatives to enforce accountability, by mobilizing multiple cultural symbols, one of them being the right to quality education for

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all (e.g. UNESCO, 2017; OECD, 2016). As a consequence of this international influence, many countries adopted national large-scale assessments and test-based accountability systems (Verger et al., 2019), which have put much pressure on teachers' work (Ball, 2003) and affected different dimensions of teacher autonomy (Lennert da Silva & Mølstad, 2020).

However, it is unlikely that international policy uniformly shapes national and local educational contexts. A reason for this is that diverse policy actors at different levels translate rather than simply implement policies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Therefore, to address national specificities in the study of policy adoption this paper borrows from an institutional logics perspective, a branch of institutional theory that focuses on how belief systems shape and are shaped by individuals and organizations (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2013; Powell & Bromley, 2013; Parish, 2019). It focuses on the following cases, one developed country (Norway) and one developing country (Brazil).

The research question is:

In what ways does the national curriculum policy of Norway and Brazil adopt the accountability logic?

The authors recognize that there is an accountability logic found at different institutional levels, from the global to the local (cf. Thornton et al., 2012; Author, year). Further, this logic is influenced by its situation in multiple social spaces, in an inter-institutional system (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2013). Accordingly, diverse policy actors, with the aim to respond to the needs and problems at hand, can combine aspects of different institutional orders, for example, the state, the market, the corporation, and the profession. Moreover, as will be shown in this article, complementary or competing aspects of the accountability logic might co-exist, affecting its source of legitimacy and how this logic is likely to be enacted in different contexts.

This study adopts a 'most different system design' as it intentionally compares different countries while concentrating on key similarities (Landman & Carvalho, 2017). In this case, comparing two countries that present striking socio-economic, cultural, and political differences apart from the implementation, in the 2000s, of quality assessment systems to improve education and students' learning outcomes as a response to the disappointing results in PISA (Karseth & Sivesind, 2011; Therrien & Loyola, 2001). Further, both countries have a testing system centralized by the national state (Lennert da Silva & Mølstad, 2020), which indicates a common presence of accountability measures.

On the other hand, by concentrating on these two cases, this study can gain a deeper understanding of the contextual specificities of each country, as well as their similarities and/or differences (Landman & Carvalho, 2017) in the adoption of the global accountability logic. Moreover, this study is attentive to the need of having "context qualified" researchers to carry out the research (Brisard et al., 2007, p. 224). That is to

say, the authors' backgrounds and experiences have influenced the study design, and facilitated the access to the policy documents under examination.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: the next section presents the institutional logics perspective and how aspects of this perspective are used in this study. Then, this paper describes the data sources, methodological approach, and study contexts. In the findings section, each country is described in relation to the themes that emerged from the literature and the analysis of the documents. This paper then discusses how national curriculum policy adopts the accountability logic, followed by the concluding remarks.

2 Institutional logics perspective

In comparative education, the role of international policy ideas in national educational systems can be addressed by three main theoretical approaches (Verger, 2014). The first is institutionalism that emphasizes "the impact of ideas once they become institutionalized at a range of scales" (Verger, 2014, p. 17). These ideas "are embedded in a broad range of institutions, such as international regimes, systems of values and norms, and policy paradigms" (Verger, 2014, p. 17), which shape policy actors' behaviors and preferences. The second is rationalism that understands policy-makers as rational actors making decisions to boost their educational systems based on evidence of 'what works' (Verger, 2014, p. 18). The third is constructivism "that places ideas at the center of analytical models" (Verger, 2014, p. 20). This approach does not deny that ideas can work as embedded in institutions, but it is more interested in the social processes, often marked by power relations, by which ideas that were initially held by a minority become widely adopted and institutionalized (Verger, 2014, p. 20).

This paper builds upon Verger's (2014) institutionalism approach since it is interested in studying how the national curriculum policy of Norway and Brazil adopts the global accountability logic. Adoption is explored by borrowing from an institutional logics perspective, a branch of institutional theory that focuses on how belief systems shape and are shaped by individuals and organizations (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2013; Powell & Bromley, 2013; Parish, 2019).

Thornton et al. (2012, p. 2) defined an institutional logic "as the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences". According to an institutional logics perspective, an institutional logic has symbolic, material, and socially constructed aspects (Thornton et al., 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 2013). Firstly, an institutional logic is founded upon cultural symbols, that is, assumptions, values, and beliefs that are context-dependent. Secondly, an institutional logic has a material aspect based on the organization of resources, action, time, and space. Thirdly, an institutional logic is socially constructed in context, meaning that individuals and organizations can

activate or mobilize different aspects of an institutional logic and order to respond to their needs and interests.

Thornton et al. (2012) presented an inter-institutional system of institutional orders in which each order represents a different set of expectations for social relations and individual and organizational behavior. This inter-institutional system includes seven orders, which are market, corporation, community, profession, state, family, and religion. The institutional logics perspective views the actions and interactions of individuals and organizations as embedded in multiple institutional orders, however, at the same time, constructing and constituting these institutional orders (Thornton & Ocasio, 2013).

Based on the institutional logics perspective and literature on accountability in education (e.g. Bergh, 2015; Mausethagen, 2013; Verger et al., 2019), the authors define the global accountability logic as symbolic and material practices, that are related to making visible and reporting students' learning outcomes to the public, and to interested social groups and individuals, by which school actors and schools provide meaning to their practices and organize their work in schools. In this article, the authors explore different aspects of the logic of accountability. For example, cultural aspects, by connecting the logic of accountability to the value of human rights and education for all. Material aspects, by describing the implementation of quality assessment systems, with large-scale tests as their main component. Social construction aspects, by observing how policy-makers borrow aspects of this logic, drawing on the different institutional orders to provide meaning, organize and reproduce material practices and resources.

The authors identify three main themes in which the global logic of accountability, primarily through the work of the OECD, disseminates and promotes the global accountability logic by borrowing aspects of different institutional orders to strengthen the legitimacy of this logic and ensure its enactment by individuals and organizations at the national level. These are as follows.

Accountability and education for all

Firstly, the justification for the logic of accountability can be seen to have its roots in the promotion of the value of human rights and education for all. As seen in the quotation below, the OECD's justification for PISA is education for all. For the OECD, education is one of the major avenues for achieving its aim of social and economic development in its member and partner countries (Schleicher, 2019). This can also be seen as a strategy of many nation-states, to increase and redistribute community goods to its citizens (Thornton et al., 2012, p.73). OECD advocates the use of accountability tools by nation-states, such as the use of educational indicators, with the aim to adjust policies and ensure quality education for all, as illustrated here:

PISA is not only the world's most comprehensive and reliable indicator of students' capabilities, it is also a powerful tool that countries and economies can use to fine-tune their education policies... That is why the OECD produces this triennial report on the state of education around the globe: to

share evidence of the best policies and practices, and to offer our timely and targeted support to help countries provide the best education possible for all of their students (Schleicher, 2019, p. 2).

This blending of accountability and the symbolic human rights promoting the value of education for all provides meaning to OECD's activities and organization of the use of material resources, such as large-scale comparative surveys, league tables, policy documents with recommendations for action, etc. Moreover, by connecting the accountability logic with wider socially accepted cultural frames, as the right to quality education, OECD justifies the legitimacy of this logic and contributes to its widespread adoption by policy actors at different levels, which impacts on national educational systems, schools, and individual teachers.

Managerial accountability

Secondly, the OECD promotes and disseminates its' accountability logic through the use of accountability tools by public managers, who are responsible for promoting efficiency through standards and the measuring, monitoring, and controlling of performance outputs, in a managerial model of accountability (Sinclair, 1995, p. 222). According to Bergh (2015, p. 594), student achievement has become the prime indicator of the quality of education, assisting schools in the task of measuring the distance between goals and outputs. This understanding of accountability borrows from the institutional orders of the market and the corporation. The former having as a strategy to increase efficiency, and the latter having the top management as a source of authority to apply the means to achieve specified aims (Thornton et al., 2012, p.73). The OECD's policy recommendation below highlights the importance of the role of school leadership:

The understanding of the main components of school leadership has evolved over the years. It has encompassed a series of aspects, such as establishing goals, providing pertinent professional development and taking action for development of curriculum and improvement of instruction, while not losing sight of managerial aspects of the school (OECD, 2020, p. 180).

Professional accountability

Thirdly, the OECD promotes and disseminates its' accountability logic through control mechanisms exercised by the professional community on individual teachers. In this sense, the institutional order of the professional group can reinforce the commitment to common values and ideology (Thornton et al., 2012, p.73), such as education for all. This makes visible individual actions and can lead to accountability and compulsion by teachers to adjust their practices to protect their professional status and reputation (Thornton et al., 2012, p.73). The OECD recommends that schools leaders encourage such professional cooperation as a way to increase teachers' responsibility for improving students' learning outcomes, as illustrated here:

School leaders can set the tone for teachers by encouraging teachers to co-operate with each other to develop new teaching practices and take responsibility for improving their teaching skills, and by ensuring that teachers feel responsible for their students' learning outcomes (OECD, 2014, p.11).

Therefore, the professional community itself exerts pressure to improve students' learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers might adopt a performance-oriented responsibility, organizing their work to meet performance targets (Mausethagen et al., 2018; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014).

These three themes presented above are not exhaustive, which means that the global accountability logic might contain other aspects. However, these are the three main themes identified by the authors that will be used to assist in the thematic analysis, as described in the methods section, and in the organization of the findings and discussion sections.

3 Methods

This study employs an analysis of policy documents. Using national policy in research is useful because they are authentic documents (Bryman, 2012). Usually, contemporary policy documents are available on official websites facilitating public access. Further, these documents have a clear and comprehensible meaning. They reflect the beliefs, values, attitudes, and the like of a given society at a particular time (Bryman, 2012), being relevant sources to study the accountability logic in the two country-cases. Some researchers have pointed to problems of reliability in policy documents, that they may show biases, emphasizing some ideas rather than others. Nevertheless, as Bryman (2012, p.550) explains, "such documents can be interesting precisely because of the biases they reveal", featuring issues of social interest in the current educational scenario.

The aim is to establish a reasonable level of functional equivalence between the compared national curriculum policies. This study adapts the model presented by Mølstad and Hansén (2013), comparing curriculum as a governing instrument. This model has three levels of hierarchy according to the institutional level where decisions are made and the nature of the decisions made at each level. The model moves from strict and very specific normative prescriptions on level one to less rigid, but often more detailed recommendations on level three (Mølstad & Hansén, 2013, p. 743).

Table 1. Governing instruments of compulsory public education in Norway and Brazil

	Norwegian governing body	Brazilian governing body
Level one:		
Act (law)	Parliament	Congress
Decree	Non applicable	President
Level two:		
White papers and Regulations	Parliament and Ministry of Education and Research	National Board of Education
National curriculum	Directorate for Education and Training	Ministry of Education
Level three:		

Circular letters	Directorate for Education and Training	Decentralized to federal-state education systems
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Adapted from Mølstad and Hansén (2013). Elaborated by the authors.

This paper focuses on level two policies, that is, white papers and national curricula, since they are functionally equivalent for comparison. The white papers selected were the two most recent ones in Norway and the three in Brazil that deal with core principles and values attached to basic education. The curriculum documents selected were the general part of the most recent curricula. In Norway, these documents correspond to the years 2016 and 2017, and, in Brazil, to the period 2010-2019. One limitation is that the time frame of the documents available is not exactly the same, although showing some overlap. In Norway, the documents provide information limited to the present time, and, in Brazil, the documents allow for consideration of a short period of time that reveal differences in political contexts, however, also depicting the current state of the accountability logic in this country.

White papers

In both countries, white papers are reports that can provide the basis for a draft resolution or bill at a later stage in the Parliament (Norway) or Congress (Brazil). In Brazil, the discussion and voting of resolutions on educational matters generally occur internally at the National Board of Education (NBE) agency under the Ministry of Education, formed by experts chosen by the President of the Republic. In Norway, a group of experts selected by the Ministry of Education and Research prepares white papers (Meld.St.) to present educational matters to the Parliament (Storting).

National curricula

Both countries have centralized national curricula. In Norway, groups of experts, teachers, and union representatives, facilitated by the Directorate for Education and Training (DET), an agency under the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), are responsible for the preparation of the national curriculum. The latter is a set of documents prepared and disseminated separately, consisting of the general part and curricula in subjects, based on the Education Act and the principles of the last school reform, known as Knowledge Promotion (Mølstad & Hansén, 2013). In Brazil, a group of experts selected by the Minister of Education (ME) is responsible for the elaboration of the national curriculum. This document is a one-piece document, describing core competencies and minimum content with the aim to guide assessments and the preparation of textbooks and other curriculum policies within Brazil.

Translation and use of documents

The white papers and the Brazilian national curriculum are in their original language and the authors directly translated the citations used in this paper. The Norwegian core curriculum has an English version. The following documents are examined:

In Norway, (1) Report to the Parliament no. 28 - Subjects - Specialization – Understanding. A renewal of the Knowledge Promotion (MER, 2016), referred to as Report to the Parliament no. 28 – A renewal of the Knowledge Promotion. (2) Report to the Parliament no. 21 - Desire for learning - early efforts and quality in school (MER, 2017), referred to as Report to the Parliament no. 21 – Desire for learning. (3) The core curriculum - values and principles for primary and secondary education and training (DET, 2017).

In Brazil, (1) Report no. 07/2010, which defines General National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education (NBE, 2010a), referred to as Report no. 07/2010 – General Curriculum Guidelines. (2) Reports no. 08/2010 and no. 03/2019, which deal with the minimum standards of quality education for Public Basic Education (NBE, 2010b; NBE, 2019), referred by their numbers. (3) Common National Curriculum Base for Child and Basic Education (ME, 2017), introductory chapters.

Thematic analysis

This study applies thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Ryan & Bernard, 2016) of the documents. This analytical approach is useful because it can be used to identify patterns within and across data sets guided by the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). The process of analysis consisted of two phases:

Phase 1 – The deductive process focused on searching for data related to accountability informed by the literature on the topic and the three themes identified by the authors above (accountability and education for all, managerial accountability, and professional accountability).

Phase 2 – The inductive process sought to find data related to accountability that emerged from the reading of the documents. In this phase, what emerged was the theme of questioning accountability, referring to direct criticism regarding the use of accountability measures by the national government. This theme appeared markedly different in the documents of the two countries analyzed. As such, the authors considered it important to be addressed in the findings and discussion sections.

4 Contexts

This section provides background information on the educational policy contexts of each country, having the logic of accountability as the focus of the description.

Norway

In Norway, the logic of accountability is associated with the beliefs of ensuring educational quality, promoting learning, and improving education. The discussion on accountability dates back to 1988 when an OECD report questioned whether the country had sufficient tools for monitoring the quality of its education system and proposed several accountability measures to ensure educational quality (Mausethagen, 2013; Tveit, 2014). However, it was only in 2004, with the ‘PISA shock’, where the country scored barely above the average despite its high levels of spending on education (Karseth & Sivesind, 2011), that a national quality assessment system with accountability purposes was implemented.

In the Norwegian country background report that provided information for the OECD thematic review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes, accountability is “understood as being synonymous with control and supervision – through such actions as measuring of results or undertaking inspections”. “This term also covers the goal of promoting learning so operators in the system can achieve continuous improvement” (DET, 2011, p. 2).

According to Tveit (2014), national tests are the best-known component of the national quality assessment system, which also includes the School Portal (Skoleporten), international studies, education statistics, user surveys, and inspections (DET, 2011). Mausethagen (2013, p. 13) explained that the purpose of the national tests was to publish the results of individual schools to hold schools accountable and drive them to improve results. However, school ranking prompted school competition and received widespread public criticism (Mausethagen, 2013; Tveit, 2014). As a consequence of this criticism, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, responsible for the tests, suspended their application for one year and strengthened their formative purpose through providing information on the student’s competencies to assist teachers in feedback and planning of strategies with a view to development in the subject. Nevertheless, this does not mean that tensions between accountability demands and formative purposes were solved, as they continue to co-exist in this instrument (Tveit, 2014).

Brazil

In Brazil, the implementation of a national assessment system, in the end of the 1990s, is associated with the belief of increasing efficiency and performance in international comparisons (Therrien & Loyola, 2001). The Brazilian National Education Plan (NC, 2014) has included the PISA average as an indicator of educational quality. PISA is also part of the country’s educational assessments along with national assessments (NC, 2014).

According to Villani and Oliveira (2018), national indicators are used to measure and analyze the efficiency of inputs (e.g. material resources, teachers’ qualifications and working hours) to produce desirable outputs. These are evidenced by the improvement of

students' school flux progression and performance in national and international tests (Villani & Oliveira, 2018, p. 1347).

Macedo (2019) identified three major signifiers in Brazilian national curriculum policy. (1) Demands for accountability that come from institutional bureaucracies responsible for educational management and private sectors, focused on the assessment of students' performance. (2) Demands for social justice are framed in terms of redistributive policies or learning rights by social groups and networks linked to critical political positions as academic movements, academics, and teachers. (3) Demands for liberty as minimum regulation of the economy and some aspects of education. The actors and networks of this group are religious conservative groups (Catholics as well as evangelical), ultraliberal financial capital, and military sectors that demand the freedom to educate their children and for liberating the country from a leftist political ideology. Macedo (2019, p. 190) explained that accountability and liberty are the current hegemonic signifiers, which does not mean that social justice demands are not present in national curriculum policy as its supporters constantly seek to increase their scope of influence in the curriculum making processes.

5 Findings

This section describes each country-case with the following themes that were found or emerged from the literature and the analysis of the documents: accountability and education for all, managerial accountability, professional accountability, and questioning accountability.

Norway

Accountability and education for all

Norway aligns with the global accountability logic that connects accountability measures with the right to education, as disseminated by international organizations (e.g. UNESCO, 2017; OECD, 2016; Schleicher, 2019). The Norwegian documents highlight that the school's role in today's society is to give all students opportunities to learn and develop their abilities, regardless of their backgrounds, as the example below:

A good school educates and forms, evens out social disparities, providing equal opportunities regardless of whether you grow up in Alta, in Alna, or in Arendal (MER, 2017, p.6, authors' translation).

Both Reports to the Parliament (MER, 2016; 2017) use the disparities in the results of national tests to argue for a good school for all. Both documents call attention to large variations in students' performance on national tests between and within schools, indicating discrepancies in the educational offer, as illustrated below:

There are relatively large variations in student performance on national tests between schools, municipalities, and counties (MER, 2016, p.13, authors' translation).

Closing performance gaps ensures that all students get the same benefits from the educational offer, helping them in further education, participation in the labor market and society, as a basis for a good life, as well as economic growth and future welfare of the country, as in the following:

Today, the content and quality of the education offer will have a greater impact on economic growth and future welfare (MER, 2017, p.10, authors' translation).

In the Report to the Parliament no. 21 – Desire for Learning (Chapter 3), the quality of education is characterized by: (1) a good and inclusive learning environment as a goal in itself and as means to improve students' learning outcomes. (2) Students mastering basic skills and acquiring good academic competencies as evidenced by results in international and national tests. (3) More students complete secondary education with competencies valued in the labor market or higher education (MER, 2017, p.16, authors' translation).

Managerial accountability

Both Norwegian white papers express the role of the national government setting goals and standards and monitoring students' learning outcomes, while the local level is responsible for organizing the means to improve students' learning outcomes. The Report to the Parliament no. 21 – Desire for learning justifies the distribution of responsibilities in the educational system, as seen here:

International research shows that the decentralization of decisions about organizing, solving tasks, and using resources has positive effects on students' learning, given that the local level has the competence and willingness to take responsibility. Among other things, it is important to have a great deal of freedom to allocate resources, make appointments, determine salaries, and develop teaching. The local level usually has better knowledge of its circumstances, greater ability to utilize resources, and can develop more effective measures than the state level (MER, 2017, p.12, authors' translation).

The Report no. 28 – A renewal of the Knowledge Promotion presents five principles that serve as a basis for the governing of schools: clear national goals, knowledge of students' learning outcomes, clear responsibilities, great local freedom of action, and a solid support and guidance apparatus (MER, 2016, p.9, authors' translation). With the granting of increased autonomy to schools, local actors are encouraged to use the knowledge on student achievement, organize resources and strategies to improve students' learning outcomes.

Professional accountability

Professional cooperation is as a key to evaluating and developing practices, as illustrated below:

School should be a professional environment where teachers, leaders and other members of staff reflect on common values, and assess and develop their practice (DET, 2017, p .21).

Cooperation within schools and between schools and municipalities is a central element in the Report to the Parliament no. 21 – Desire for learning (Chapter 4). According to this document, professional cooperation contributes to control mechanisms that have significantly higher legitimacy among the teaching profession than state control by itself (MER, 2017, p. 32). Another example of the relevance of professional cooperation as a form of holding teachers accountable is illustrated below:

(...) teachers and leaders in well-functioning communities: feel a shared responsibility for all students' learning; are committed to documenting learning outcomes; work together to develop a common understanding of how classroom practices can be improved; jointly plan educational curricula and educational strategies, and evaluate the effects on teaching; share and further develop teaching that proves to be effective (MER, 2017, p.26, authors' translation).

The assumption that participation in a professional community can reinforce a commitment to common values (i.e. effective teaching that improves students' learning) is also present at the global level as exemplified by OECD's policy recommendations (OECD, 2014). Policy actors use professional cooperation as a legitimate control mechanism. Accordingly, teachers feel committed to documenting learning outcomes. They also develop a sense of self-discipline and adjust their plans and strategies in relation to their professional group with the aim to improve students' learning outcomes (Mausethagen et al., 2018; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014).

Questioning accountability

This study did not find any direct criticism in the Norwegian documents regarding the use of accountability measures.

Brazil

Accountability and education for all

The national curriculum (ME, 2017) establishes a set of core competencies to which all students are entitled throughout their school life. This document expresses an alignment with the international scenario, mentioning the focus on competencies of international assessments organized by the OECD and other international organizations (ME, 2017, p. 5, 13).

This policy also recognizes that school education should promote global human development and formation, encompassing intellectual, physical, affective, social, ethical, moral, and symbolic dimensions, with the aim of building a just, democratic and inclusive society (ME, 2017, p. 14, 16, 25).

The Report no. 08/2010 on minimum quality educational standards presents a table with Norway, Ireland, Finland, England, and Spain, on the one side, and Iran, Brazil, India, and Bangladesh, on the other side, showing the strong correlation between positive students' learning outcomes and high levels of country's human development and per capita wealth indexes (NBE, 2010b, p. 3). Those countries presented in the same group as Norway are seen as examples of high per capita achievement in the areas of health, education, and income leading to better educational results, as opposed to those countries in the same group as Brazil. Finland is also mentioned as an exemplary case of teacher recruitment and efficiency in the use of resources per student in relation to PISA results.

Managerial accountability

According to Report no. 07/2010 - General Curriculum Guidelines, large-scale assessments subsidize education systems in formulating equity policies to ensure a good educational provision for all students, as illustrated here:

As is known, the ENEM and Prova Brasil [large-scale standardized] assessments are state policies that subsidize the systems in the formulation of public equity policies, as well as providing aspects to the municipalities and schools to locate their weaknesses and promote actions, in an attempt to overcome them, through integrated goals (NBE, 2010a, p. 7, authors' translation, clarification in brackets).

The Brazilian curriculum has reallocated autonomy to regional and local education systems and schools, while defined the common core competencies and basic knowledge that they have to address (ME, 2017, p.16). As seen above, local actors are responsible for using the knowledge on student achievement to overcome their weaknesses and reduce inequalities. Besides the centralization of the curriculum, the central state promotes actions and policies in different institutional levels regarding assessment (such as the large-scale assessments mentioned in the citation above), elaboration of teaching material, and the criteria for the offer of adequate infrastructure (ME, 2017, p.21).

Report no. 08/2010 is an example of a policy that establishes minimum quality educational standards for all Brazilian schools. These minimum quality standards are seen as a way to promote economic development and reduce social and regional inequalities in the country, as seen here:

The results of Prova Brasil [large-scale assessment], as well as those of SAEB [educational indicator], showed, on the educational side and with a very precise focus, the existence of many "Brazils". (...) [This] reflects a very unequal school system, where most Brazilians do not have the same learning opportunity, creating profound social inequalities, both local and regional. Based on these considerations, it is worth asking: how to build a more just and egalitarian country through education? What obstacles lead to such disparate results in the Brazilian educational system? How can the differences between schools be reduced and thus allow a fairer comparative analysis of the assessment results? (NBE, 2010b, p. 7, authors' translation, clarification in brackets)

This policy suggests three measures to improve the quality of education: (1) valuing the teaching profession, (2) increasing educational investments, and (3) implementing

minimum quality standards for all schools (NBE, 2010b). This document also provides suggestions for strengthening teacher professionalism (e.g. providing training and better remuneration for teachers) and describes in detail investments in infrastructure and material resources to ensure a minimum quality standard for all students in schools.

Professional accountability

The Brazilian national curriculum policy refers to the collective construction of educational practice (NBE, 2010a; NBE, 2010b). There is an assumption that cooperation between school and local community can reinforce the commitment to improve educational quality, as in the following:

(...) while democratic management introduces legitimacy, on the one hand, it strengthens school autonomy on the other; greater autonomy is associated with greater accountability and social transparency of the decisions taken. This requires greater integration between the school and the local community (NBE, 2010b, p.15, authors' translation).

As seen above, democratic management is also a form of accountability that controls and makes visible the actions of school professionals. In this form of accountability, the school professionals together with the local community decide on goals according to their needs and interests.

Questioning accountability

Even though the Brazilian documents express the need for accountability tools to improve and ensure education for all, this discourse comes together with a criticism of accountability. Report no. 07/2010 – General Curriculum Guidelines questions the use of large-scale assessments by the national government as disconnected from the reality of schools and creating exclusions, from a learning rights perspective (Macedo, 2019):

Do these programs take into account the identity of each system, each school? Would not the failure of the student, as ascertained by these assessment programs, be expressing the way the assessment takes place, not the way the school and the teachers plan and operate the curriculum? Would the applied assessment system be related to what actually happens in Brazilian schools? As a consequence of this external assessment method, would not the students be punished with terrible results and terrible news? (NBE, 2010a, p. 7, authors' translation).

According to this policy, the school community should jointly construct the quality of the school from its local conditions. As such, the use of indicators and statistical data should be one of many other tools in this process of collective construction of educational quality. The document also states that the formative character of assessment in supporting learning should predominate over the quantitative (NBE, 2010a, pp. 17-18, 48).

Groups with an ultraliberal ideology (Macedo, 2019) have also challenged the use of educational indicators and minimum quality standards as grounds for investment in Brazilian schools. In a more recent policy (NBE, 2019) the concept of quality education of previous policies (NBE, 2010b) is refuted. Report no. 03/2019 advocates for a greater

debate on the definition of quality to go beyond investment. This white paper argues that there are not enough studies linking increased investments in schools with results from large-scale assessments. This report also states that setting a minimum quality standard for schools does not take into account regional characteristics, as well as aspects related to the government's economy. This policy focuses on the discussion of material resources and investments, as measured by the cost per student index, and the inability of the national government to meet these expenses rather than the roles and responsibilities of different actors and institutional levels in ensuring a good educational provision for all students.

6 Discussion - comparison

This section discusses and compares how national curriculum policy adopts the global accountability logic by borrowing from the institutional logics perspective, as presented in the theory section (Section 2). In particular, the construction of the accountability logic as evidenced through policy documents and the cultural symbols and material practices connected to them.

Accountability and education for all

In Norway, there is a belief that accountability instruments, mainly large-scale tests, can ensure quality education for all. In the findings section (Section 5), the accountability logic combined with the value of the right to education (e.g. UNESCO, 2017; OECD, 2016, Schleicher, 2019). The focus is on the provision of equal conditions for all students to perform well in large-scale tests regardless of their backgrounds (MER, 2016, 2017). Further, good performance in these tests is positively associated with opportunities to continue in further education and enter the labor market, which, in turn, advance economic growth and welfare of the country (MER, 2017). This combination of the value of education for all and an economic view of education is one aspect of the accountability logic in the Norwegian case, which aligns with the OECD global logic of accountability.

Similarly to Norway, Brazilian curriculum policy combined the assumption that accountability instruments ensure equal access to a good standard of educational provision for all students, contributing to reduce social and economic inequalities in the country (NBE, 2010a, 2010b). In both of these cases, the underlying value behind accountability is that of education for all in line with the global accountability logic promoted by the OECD.

At least at the national policy level, both of these cases accept the symbolic notion that accountability can lead to better quality education for all and wealth growth and redistribution. This symbolic notion provides legitimation for the adoption of national quality assessment systems, in line with the OECD global logic of accountability.

Managerial accountability

The managerial accountability aspect of the global logic also manifests in the material practices and tools, as in the case of national quality assessment systems and the use of indicators to measure educational outcomes. Norway implemented a national quality assessment system in 2004 (Karseth & Sivesind, 2011), as has been recommended by OECD policies since the 1980s (Mausethagen, 2013; Tveit, 2014). As shown in the findings section, this system is coupled with decentralization of responsibilities to the local level, giving local actors increased autonomy and responsibility to organize their work to improve students' learning outcomes (MER, 2016, 2017).

Likewise in Brazil, the concern with efficiency and international comparisons led to the development of a curriculum based on competencies and focused on the assessment of outcomes (Therrien & Loyola, 2001; ME, 2017). Brazil implemented large-scale assessments and educational indicators as accountability tools to improve educational efficiency and performance in international assessments, such as PISA (Therrien & Loyola, 2001). The Brazilian curriculum policy uses PISA averages as an indicator of educational quality, and PISA is also part of the national assessment system (NC, 2014; Villani & Oliveira, 2018). As with Norway, Brazilian curriculum policy decentralizes responsibility for the use of accountability tools and the elaboration of policies and organization of strategies to regional and local educational systems and schools (NBE, 2010a; NBE, 2010b). Further, the Brazilian government set a minimum quality standard for school infrastructure and material resources to ensure a common basis for the improvement of the quality of education (NBE, 2010b).

In both cases, the managerial aspect of the global logic of accountability has been adopted in national policy documents leading to the decentralization of responsibility to improve learning outcomes at the regional and local levels.

Professional accountability

In the case of Norway, there is a strong focus on the need for professional collaboration as a way to promote student learning, in line with the OECD's policy recommendations (OECD, 2014), and policy actors use professional collaboration as a legitimate control mechanism to improve student learning as measured by students' learning outcomes. In the case of Brazil, accountability is deferred to both the professional school and local community to work in collaboration to promote learning. Both cases have adopted the professional accountability aspect of the global accountability logic, although professional accountability featured more strongly in the Norwegian policy documents than in the Brazilian ones. In the Brazilian curriculum policy, school professionals together with the local community decide specific goals and organize the means to achieve these goals, which are not necessarily related to student performance in large-scale assessments, as shown in the policy documents (NBE, 2010a; NBE, 2010b).

Questioning accountability

Whilst in both cases the three aspects of the global accountability logic have been adopted in national policy documents to a certain extent, tensions are evident in the policy documents that require attention. In Norway, demands for accountability have created tensions between the concern for students' achievement and students' learning. The latter meaning the use of test results as a source of information to assist teachers in the process of feedback and planning of strategies to promote students' learning (Tveit, 2014). In the Norwegian curriculum policy, the tension between demands for accountability creating school competition (Mausethagen, 2013) and formative educational purposes that foster students' learning (Tveit, 2014) seems to be conciliated by teachers working in a professional community and jointly planning educational curricula and strategies to improve students' learning (MER, 2017). However, this blending of accountability and formative aspects has not taken away the focus on students' performance in large-scale assessments (MER, 2016; MER, 2017).

Brazilian policy seems to go beyond the focus on students' learning outcomes, stating the relevance of the formative process of education in its various dimensions (ME, 2017). This view of education also reveals the cultural values associated with the accountability logic in the Brazilian case. Brazilian curriculum policy, whilst adopting the three aspects of the global accountability logic, reveals tensions in the social construction of this logic. These tensions can be seen in the existence of policy actors with different beliefs and values in national policymaking (Macedo, 2019). The first group advocating accountability as a means to improve the quality of education and students' performance in large-scale assessments. The second being sceptical of the use of accountability tools and arguing for a parsimonious use of these tools in the collective work of constructing educational quality. The third criticizing expenditures with accountability measures, arguing that they do not give the expected results in student achievement and that students' performance in large-scale assessments cannot justify investments in a minimum quality standard for all schools. The cultural symbols and values of the first and second groups appeared in the same pieces of documents (NBE, 2010a; NBE, 2010b), while those of the third group were clear in the white paper of the 2019 (NBE, 2019), as shown in the findings section. The national curriculum (ME, 2017) overall reflects an alignment with the three aspects of the global logic, however, these tensions identified to reduce the cohesion of the documents which could lead to heterogeneity in how the policy is implemented in schools.

In sum, the Brazilian curriculum policy presents contradictory aspects of the accountability logic, which reflect the beliefs and values of different social groups in national policymaking to the present time (Macedo, 2019). In the Norwegian curriculum policy, the three aspects of the global accountability logic are coherently aligned, which brings cohesiveness to the Norwegian policy documents.

7 Conclusion

This paper sought to answer the question - In what ways does the national curriculum policy of Norway and Brazil adopt the accountability logic? In doing so, it revealed that even though Brazil and Norway adopted the global accountability logic as promoted and disseminated by the OECD, they did so in different ways.

Norwegian curriculum policy presented a construction of complementary aspects of the accountability logic that reinforced each other. Accordingly, these complementary aspects of the accountability logic might strengthen its source of legitimacy and stability. Ultimately, the Norwegian case presented a cohesive adoption of the three aspects of the global logic of accountability. There was no direct contestation in the documents that were analyzed. As a consequence of this cohesiveness within the policy, the authors wonder whether this homogeneity can also be found in the way that this policy is implemented in schools.

Brazilian policy, on the other hand, revealed tensions and a questioning of the global accountability logic, arguing that it creates exclusions and it is not sufficient to respond to socio-economic and cultural issues of the country. However, at the same time, Brazilian policy has adopted the value of education for all and the use of accountability tools to achieve this. Whilst the OECD presented accountability as a way to promote education for all, the Brazilian policy documents revealed a tension in that they question whether accountability measures can ensure education for all at the national level.

The different translations of the accountability logic reflected the context-specific features of each country and illustrated both homogeneity and heterogeneity that still exists in different educational contexts.

It is a limitation of this paper that the authors did not explore how the policies are implemented in schools in the two contexts. Further research is needed to explore teachers' perspectives on their work and autonomy under the accountability logic. Another limitation of this paper is that it did not focus on the agency of policy-makers as rational actors when engaging with global institutional logics, nor on policymaking processes as the policy was written. This would be an interesting area to research. The authors welcome the Comparative and International Education field to enlarge the comparison to include other nation-states and in addition to examining if and how the accountability logic at the national level influences the global level.

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