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## **The Unintended Consequences of Governance of Education at a Distance Through Assessment and Standardization**

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### **1 Introduction**

Governance of education is in transition and education quality represents one key discursive justification for diverse reforms. Transnational actors and commercial interests play a central role in the reform movements (Kotthoff & Klerides, 2015). Using data as a technology of governance (Grek et al., 2011), quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) is an essential tool for reinforcing central control while at the same time allowing more autonomy to the local actors and agents, and creating the need for new experts and data infrastructures (Lawn & Segerholm, 2011).

Globalization has been described as resulting in the rescaling of politics and policy (Lingard and Rawolle, 2010), further complicated by the rise of a new mode of governance at a distance through QAE techniques and evaluation data, and the consequent reshuffling of the position of the nation-state and local space. It rests on the provision and translation of information about subjects, objects and processes and brings new limits and possibilities for agents (cf. Hansen and Flyverbom, 2014). The new architecture of governance relies on the production and mobility of data (Ball, 2016), (Clarke, 2012). The expanding practices of evaluation produce knowledge about education, which may allow the nation-state to extend its capacity to govern across territory and into the classroom through standardization, commensuration, transparency and comparison and have severe unintended consequences to the behavior of educational agents. Simultaneously, states are increasingly incorporated into the global accountability regime that helps the “national eye” to govern with the “global eye” (Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003).

Places are the locus where all scales conflate, from the supra-national through to the national and local embedded into a web of multi-scalar and multi-actor relations. The degree of freedom of agents in defining and implementing strategies, taking decisions and accessing resources, relies on those relations, but is never fully determined by them nor straight carry out the intended aims. Most reforms are changing the situations, but also influenced by various educational policies, interest groups, the working of the economy, public meanings, and ways of conceiving the specific issues, evaluation results and other factors. This applies to all aspects, eg. from teacher training (Cramer et al., 2012), how to handle educational disadvantage

(Gideonse, 1993), (Cramer et al. 2012, pp, 97-98) or the involvement of other actors (Du Bois Raymond et al., 2012), (Dale et al., 2012), (Kazepov, Robertson & Rinne, 2015)

In this article I will analyze the unintended consequences of governance of education at a distance through assessment and standardization to the changes of national and local agents.

In subchapter two I first present some facts of the context of context of national education by describing the influence of the globalization, international organisations and the new system of governance of education at a distance. In subchapter three I take to the discussion the narrowing room for the nation states to operate and the national and institutional opportunity structures. In subchapter four I concentrate to analyse the more and more important questions of the metrics and measurement and subchapter five the standardization of educational space. At the end of this article I go deeper to the widening use of evaluation and assessment as well as indicators in subchapter six before I conclude my article with conclusions in subchapter seven.

## **2. Globalisation, supranational organisations and governance at a distance**

The globalization of educational policy involve not only language, concepts, classifications and preferences per se but entangle in their webs a shared sequence of new cultural and political myths, sagas and beliefs, produced in a new space of meanings that swear allegiance to communality and progress. Affected by those myths, our collective understanding of education as a whole and its relationship to concepts like equality and social justice, or economy and culture is reshaped (Lawn & Lingard, 2002, pp, 299-303), (Sultana, 2002), (Sultana, 1995), (Pereyra, 1993), (Rinne et al., 2002), (Simola et al., 2002), (Dale et al., 2016)

The OECD has become one of the major agent of the internationalising, globalising and thus converging education policy processes (Taylor & al., 1997), (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). While it is primarily concerned with economic policy, education has taken on increasing importance within that mandate of OECD. Founded in 1961, the OECD has taken on an enhanced role as a policy actor, as it seeks a niche in the post-Cold War globalising world in relation to other IOs and supranational agencies (Rinne, Kallo & Hokka, 2004), (Henry & al., 2001). To this end, it has developed alliances with other IOs such as UNESCO, the European Union (EU) and the World Bank to actively promote its policy preferences. (Grek, 2009, pp, 24-25)

Unlike the EU, OECD does not have the legal instruments, nor the financial levers to actively promote policy-making at the national level of member nations. Compared to e.g. the World Bank, which has ‘power’ over nations through policy requirements and funding and loans OECD is weaker. Through rankings such as the ‘Education at a Glance’ reports, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and its Indicators in Education project it with the World Bank have become massive and impressive. Through PISA and national and thematic policy reviews, OECD’s educational agenda has become significant in framing policy options in the constitution of a global policy space in education (Grek, 2009, p, 25)

IOs cannot be understood as “mere epiphenomena” of impersonal policy machinery. Rather they are also seen as purposive actors who, are “armed with a notion of progress, an idea of how to create a better life, and some understanding of the conversion process”. They have become the “missionaries of our time” (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p,712). This raises the question – why and how OECD has been transformed to one of the most powerful agents of transnational education governance? According to Sotiria Grek this question has been contributed substantially by Kerstin Martens (2007, p, 42) in answering that it is “comparative turn ...a scientific approach to political decision making”, which has been the main driver of the success. Through OECD’s statistics, reports and studies, it has achieved “a brand which most regard indisputable; OECD’s policy recommendations are accepted as valid by politicians and scholars alike” and there seems to be no need questioning beyond the label of “OECD” to justify the authoritative character of the knowledge, facts and interpretations contained therein. The role of the OECD is the leader of “the orchestration of global knowledge networks”. (Grek 2009, p, 25)

The OECD has “created a niche as a technically highly competent agency for the development of educational indicators and comparative educational performance measures”. The data defined and collected by OECD on education is contributing to the creation of a governable space of comparison and commensurability: “the European Education Space” (Nóvoa & Lawn, 2002), (Grek, 2009, 26). These developments reflect policy convergence around what Brown and his colleagues (Brown & al., 1997, pp, 7-8) define as a new educational policy consensus:

“The new consensus is based on the idea that as the ‘walled’ economies in mid-century have given way to an increasingly global economy, the power of national government to control the outcome of economic competition has been weakened ... Indeed the competitive advantage of nations is frequently redefined in terms of the quality of

national education and training systems judged according to international standards.”

Policy instruments like indicators and the whole audit and performance-monitoring nexus have become a “significant element of the shift from government to the governance of national education systems through new institutional forms” (Grek, 2009, p, 27). The purpose of this all is:

“orienting relations between political society (via the administrative executive) and civil society (via its administered subjects) through intermediaries in the form of devices that mix technical components (measuring, calculating the rule of law, procedure) and social components (representation, symbol). (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p, 6)

The OECD has filled the niche of comparative evaluations in relation to education policy in terms of various kinds of indicators like in Education at a Glance and PISA. (Grek, 2009, 27) Patrick Le Galès, (2004, p, 243) defines governance substantially as:

“[...] a coordination process of actors, social groups and institutions that aims at reaching collectively defined and discussed objectives. Governance then concerns the whole range of institutions, networks, directives, regulations, norms, political and social uses as well as public and private actors which contribute to the stability of a society and a political regime, to its orientation, to its capacity to lead, to deliver services and to assume its legitimacy”

The changes in governance due to the new steering tools, usually used by the expert community, has been widely noted. The ideas of “steering at a distance” are helpful to understand that the principles of calculability and measurability, usually used at the private sector, originating from economics, were increasingly transferred to fields previously regulated by old bureaucratic statutes and professional norms, usually located in the public sector. Rose, (1999, p, 152) refers to the new governing technology based on accountability and assessment to which the public sector is subjected as “governance at a distance”. (Rinne & Ozga, 2011, p, 67)

Education quality represents one key discursive justification for diverse ongoing reforms of education. Using data as a tool of governance (Rose & Miller, 1992), quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) is a tool for attempting to reinforce central control at a distance while

allocating more autonomy to the local actors, and simultaneously creating the need for and relying on new experts and data infrastructures (Lawn & Segerholm, 2011). Governing at a distance rests on the provision and translation of information about subjects, objects and processes to the centers of calculation and power (Hansen & Flyverbom, 2014). (Piattoeva & al., 2018)

Scholars use the concept of governance at a distance to refer to the modes of governance in which “formal prescription is absent, indirect or enmeshed in a complex way with more or less voluntary commitment to accountability, that is, submission of organisations and individuals to external performance measurement that is often combined with (self)-evaluation” (Rinne & Ozga, 2011, p, 66). It relies on those at the centre having information about persons and events in periphery or distant from them (Miller & Rose, 1990). The concept of governance at a distance then emphasises how behavior of the governed actors is directed by the processes of collection and use of information and data by the authorities, who seek to conduct the actions and behaviour of those who are the targets of these data. However, this form of governance does not replace the traditional bureaucratic hierarchical governance, but rather complements it. Governance at a distance may be seen as reconciling “decentralised action (subsidiarity, self-responsibility) with centralized assessment (standardization) to facilitate exchange and valuation in the vast spaces and to make long distance control something the actors aim to achieve by pursuing their interests” (Rottenburg & Engle Merry, 2015, p, 22), (Piattoeva & al., 2018)

Governance at a distance necessitates “calculations at one place to be linked to actions at another not through direct imposition, but through assembling and connecting different actors and agencies into a functioning network”. These heterogeneous actors can represent as well producers as users of data. The actors, however, may also carry diverse, even opposite perceptions and interests, reflecting the heterogeneous background networks that constitute them. (Piattoeva & al., 2018)

### **3 Room for nation-states: opportunity structures as possibilities**

In national education systems and policies there are the social facts, the already existing circumstances, which include and frame the possibilities for present and future actions, with some of them more powerful and significant than others. They are called the “opportunity structures”. Opportunity structures are varying from country to country and we should

investigate and take into account those “national forms of discursive opportunity structures.” (Dale, Kazepov, Rinne & Robertson, 2016)

Opportunity structures “shape conceptions of what is desirable (or undesirable), possible, feasible, etc. through existing assumptions about, or ways of talking and thinking about, or acting, what it might be possible, desirable, feasible to do in particular areas of activity”. They limit ideas of the possible, proscriptively rather than prescriptively. They frame “conceptions of the desirable and the undesirable, the possible and the impossible, the attainable and the unattainable”. More broadly, they can be seen as collections of norms, rules, institutions, conventions, practices and discourses which restrict or enable different sets of actors in determining and executing the actions and the behavior they intend to pursue. (Dale & al., 2016)

The nature and significance of opportunity structures has been well captured by Colin Hay (2002, pp, 380-381; cited in Dale & al., 2016):

“... selective of strategy in the sense that, given a specific context, only certain courses of action are likely to see actors realise their intentions. Social, political and economic contexts are densely structured and highly contoured. As such they present an unevenly distributed configuration of opportunity and constraint to actors. They are, in short, strategically selective, for whilst they may well facilitate the ability of resource- and knowledge-rich actors to further their strategic interests, they are equally likely to present significant obstacles to the realisation of the strategic intentions of those not similarly endowed”.

There rise up significant issues around the nature and significance of national discursive opportunity structures and their profound importance in shaping education policies and practices. This also raises important scalar issues despite the puzzling resilience of nations in the context of welfare states (Barbier, 2008, p, 2).

The nation has to be seen as “the space” or the “bounded sphere” and the basis of the national policies and “political culture” is a kind of “historic amalgam of national discursive traditions as well as heir to institutional forms and frameworks”. The education policy is strongly framed: “systems are anchored in territorial, material and linguistic determinations that cannot easily be circumvented, let alone dispensed with”. This clearly points to national cultural

assumptions, as a clear and indispensable, because “education systems are taken as the key repository of that culture basis of the determinations on which education policy rests”. (Barbier 2008, p, 2)

As Stephen Ball elegantly puts it:

“National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalizing theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice.” (Ball 2007, p, 44), (Ball, 1998, p, 26)

We should understand, that “such bricolage is neither random, nor uniform in its composition and effects are themselves framed by national and local opportunity structures” (Dale & al., 2016), (Rinne & al., 2018)

Institutional opportunity structures (IOS) mean “the deeply ingrained conceptions about how education systems ‘work’, how they get things done, the set of rules, conventions, sedimented practices through which the system is administered.” IOS “sets limits to, and frames, but does not wholly control or shape current or future policies and practices...and these in turn set key limits to states’ capacity to shape policy and set limits to what could or should be done.” (Dale & al., 2016)

The IOSs also modify the broader discursive opportunity structures in particular ways, especially as it reflects and embeds conceptions of the nation(al) as it is expressed through arrangements for formal education. As Fox and Miller-Idriss (2012, p, 544) write: “Nationhood operates as an unselfconscious disposition; it underwrites people’s choices without becoming a self-conscious determinant of those choices.” It is at the level of the institutional framing of education that many aspects of the relationships between nation, school, and child are formed. (cited in Dale & Parreira do Amaral, 2015)

#### **4 Metrics and measurement**



The importance of data circulation has led researchers to call for a new sociology of numbers and quantification of education that would pay attention to how numbers are being “mobilized, circulated, consumed and contested” (Gorur, 2015, p, 13). The flexibility, stability and combinability of numbers, in contrast to a written or spoken word, are said to enable them to transcend contexts and find governmental roles in new institutions, and often for purposes other than the original ones (cf. Rose & Miller, 1992), (Lascombes & Le Gales, 2007), (Hansen & Mühlen-Schulte, 2012), (Piattoeva & al., 2018)

The principles of calculability and measurability, originating from economics are increasingly transferred to fields previously regulated by old bureaucratic statutes and professional norms. Organizations that had previously been non-profit-making, for example universities and hospitals, began to be reshaped into little companies, the output of which was then evaluated and measured by different indicators. Rose (1999, p, 152) refers to the new governing technology based on accountability and assessment to which the public sector is subjected directly as governance at a distance. With the new governing technology "abstract spaces were made material through physical redesign of organizational space and then embodied in new national and supranational designations, new budget clauses, new evaluation indicators, new success curves and the whole of new public management (NPM) culture." (Rinne & Ozga, 2011), (Rinne & al., 2018)

Every new space subjected to assessment and measurability summons its population to evaluate and measure themselves, to translate their activities into measurable and economic language in order to maximize efficiency and income, cut waste and reorganize inefficient activities. Arbitrary rule thus becomes tamed, liberalized and acknowledged as neutral and objective calculation and evaluation (Rose, 1999, pp, 152-154), (Rose & Miller, 1992). According to Rose, this is how we have moved into the “Audit Society”. (Cf. Rinne 2001, p, 107), (Rinne & Ozga, 2011)

Michael Power (Power, 1999), (Power, 2003) has developed the concepts of the “global inspectorate” and “audit society” further. In his view, audits have conspicuously replaced the confidence that rulers and governments used to feel towards the wisdom and competence of professionals and expert authority. Power sees this taking place both in schools, hospitals, universities and, more generally, in private enterprise. Power observes that evaluation in a way entails "control of controls" and "rituals of verification". (Rinne & Ozga, 2011)

Romuald Normand (in press) has characterized three concurring trends in metrics for education policy. First is classification, by “bringing things closer and ordering the world”, which makes educative facts intelligible and builds a truth of representation which shapes and guides politics, based on “knowledge produced by statistics and data collection”. Secondly there are large scale experiments, which allow building statistical series to “qualify and classify populations according to different features and variables, and to prepare post-Welfare State politics.” Metrics serve to build large banks of data on ‘what works’ whose algorithmic treatments are considered sufficient to establish evidence-based reformist proposals”. Third, standardization is a policy through which, based on metrics, “the universe of practices is harmonized and subjected to standards or ‘best practices’, disregarding cultural and contextual differences”.

Radhika Gorur (2015) wants to emphasize, that the measurement is a productive rather than descriptive activity. There are two aspects to this productivity. One is that once a measurement is in place it acts upon the world by changing understandings and behaviors. The other is that it is an investment on “a character of calculability”. According to Gorur we ought not to see measurement as just imperfect descriptions but as world-making processes. Critiquing them is not just an epistemological exercise, but a political and ontological one. Citing Oakes (1986, p, 39) Gorur (2015) wants to emphasize, that “we cannot be unaware of the political pressure resulting from the mere existence of a set of indicators”.

It is an aphorism that “we don’t just measure what we value, but that we come to value what we measure” (Gorur 2016, p, 602). Globally, education reform appears in the “grip of a contagion and promotes competition, standardization, test-based accountability and school choice in the service of a frenzied scramble to raise test scores and rankings.” Many other important values such as collaboration, personalization, trust-based professionalism and equity of outcomes are by this process neglected.

OECD’s knowledge-based regulation tools attempt to promote orthodox professional practice and increased standardization of professional formation and development. The strength and power of these tools lies in its apparently objective nature, in the attractiveness of the space of negotiation and debate that it creates, where experts, policy makers and other knowledge-brokers meet and position themselves, and in its capacity to define the terms of that engagement. (Rinne & Ozga, 2013, p, 97)

According to Pons and Van Zanten (2007) the steering tools have three main elements: (i) they reflect particular world visions that represent the agenda setting capacities of particular interests (ii) they represent a particular and politically oriented set of beliefs concerning legitimate policy in a given domain and (iii) they represent a wide and growing network of actors who are constantly drawn in to the process of intelligence-gathering, audit and meditative policy-making. (cited in Rinne & Ozga, 2013, p, 97), (Rinne & al., 2018)

Comparisons across diverse school systems, which include countries with vastly differing economies, histories, cultures, goals, ambitions and social and political situations is especially problematic for PISAs bid to develop internationally comparable indicators and measures of behaviour. To make such comparisons possible, students, test items and testing and scoring processes had to be strictly standardised and abstracted on several levels in order to render them comparable (Gorur, 2016, p, 603). Gorur claims, that the individual student, in all his or her complexity, is lost. The complex anxieties and excitements, and the goals and dreams and motivations and interests of 15-year-olds are passed by. (Gorur, 2016), (Gorur, 2011)

## **5. Standardization**

This world of ours is saturated with standards. They penetrate to all spheres of human life. Standards are not only ubiquitous, they are also normative. They create ideals and norms and normalities, but also the “less-than-ideal” and the abnormalities. “They produce social norms and encourage conformity to the ideal and dictate how things ought to be. They restrict decision-making possibilities, set parameters and narrow choice.” Standards also often incorporate standards of ethics, the breach of which may have legal and moral implications and sanctions. Standards (Gorur 2013, pp, 132-133)

“codify collective wisdom about what is acceptable in a given situation, and, explicitly or implicitly, what is not. This may create tension between individual autonomy and the codes of behavior set by anonymous, distant others, removed from the immediate context by space, time and perhaps understanding. Standardization is feared by some on the grounds that it promotes mechanistic behavior, devalues tacit and professional knowledge and attacks our very humanism by voiding idiosyncrasy, individuality, creativity, intuition and emotion.”

To ensure conformity, standards are often institutionalized processes involving different kinds of certification and formalization. The more successfully the standards are mobilized and institutionalized, the less visible and noticeable they become. Many standards are thoroughly interwoven into the very fabric of our everyday lives, operating upon us in ways we scarcely recognize them. (Gorur, 2013)

There is going on a huge invasion of politics of standardization. Standardization allows to build uniformity in time and space by creating common standards and establishing political control at a distance on work and communities of practice. Standardisation helps the State and public authorities to compare and rank individuals and groups and to create a common language shared by professionals, policy-makers and evaluators. Standards rely on a form of classification and measurement that defines limitations and exclusions in shaping the policy. They are based on scientific and expert knowledge, which give them legitimacy. “Their technicity prevents challenges and controversies, particularly when they involve a strong mobilisation of expertise in time and space”. Standardization is a strong policy instrument of power and coercion that effectively replaces traditional rules of authority, hierarchy and bureaucracy. Standards are grounded in the name of modernisation and modernity and claimed to promote “new Reason”. (Normand, in press)

Standards may be called as the “recipes for reality” (Gorur 2013, p, 133). Standardization renders the test easily adaptable to different times and spaces and thus to expansion. For example with the expectation of expanding into more than hundred nations, PISA is entering the space of middle- and low-income nations with a modified version called PISA for Development (PISA-D). PISA is detaching children from around the world from their contexts,

“Standardising them and converting them into numbers, the OECD is able to create sophisticated calculations, identify problems, and suggest solutions and policy advice with extreme specificity. Performance can be disaggregated on the basis of gender, migration status, social capital, location and other dimensions. Specific areas for intervention can thus be isolated. With each round of the survey producing more information, trend data create patterns of growth and decline. This is the type of calculus that ‘centres of calculation’ can perform from afar, sitting in a distant office, with the numbers providing a synoptic overview of the entire phenomenon, if at the expense of detail“ (Gorur, 2016, p, 603) (Gorur, 2013)

The value of a "synoptic view" is that it is available "at a glance" and provides easily absorbed and easily represented information. PISA's league tables, on which 15-year-old children from distant and diverse parts of the world are "all gathered and organized into obedient rows and columns on a single spatio-temporal frame are a perfect example of such a synoptic view". (Gorur, 2011)

The interesting phenomenon, which Radhika Gorur (2016) calls the "Seeing like PISA" is not just about the influence of PISA on national policies. Rather, it is about a particular set of approaches and understandings that are epitomized by PISA. Seeing like PISA means standardization, the narrowing field of vision focused on literacy and numeracy outcomes, abstraction, and the generation of standardized templates and protocols to guide practices.

"If the cocktail of a narrow vision, widespread standardisation and abstraction, an exclusively fiscal view, a depleted curriculum, deprofessionalised teachers and market driven accountability systems which are currently in evidence continues unchecked, we can only speculate on the effects this will have not only on the economy, but also on the moral, intellectual and ethical fibre of society." (Gorur, 2016, p, 612)

## **6 Assessment and indicators of education**

It seems that in the knowledge-based economy the supranational evaluations and rankings by numbers have very strong effects on discourses on educational policies. Especially PISA results are mentioned several times separately as pointing out by knowledge and numbers the bad and good qualities of educational systems and rankings among the countries without taking in to account the contexts. (Parreira do Amaral & Rinne, 2015)

This age can be called not only age of governance by numbers but also age of "Governance by Indicators". Major intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the World Bank, UNESCO and the OECD produce a vast range of new indicators each year. Quantification has been ramped up to such an extent that we even have indicators for such intangible things as quality of life and happiness. Indicators developed by the OECD include global statistics on energy investment, 'Skills for Jobs' indicators, 'Green Growth Indicators', 'Trade Facilitation Indicators' and the several other widely used education, health and economic indicators. Their annual At a Glance series includes Entrepreneurship at a Glance, Education at a Glance, Health at a Glance, Government at a Glance and Society at a Glance. (Gorur, 2017, p, 260)

Indicators are different from mere statistics in many significant ways. They are carefully selected statistics specifically designed to inform policy makers about the state of the education system. They raise up policy agendas, anticipate policy questions and provide information for policy decisions. They often combine data from multiple sources, including data specifically collected within certain regulated, purpose-built frameworks to facilitate comparison

“Uniquely different from the usual policy-related statistical analysis, statistical indicators are derived measures, often combining multiple data sources and several ‘statistics’ that are uniformly developed across nations, are repeated regularly over time, and have come to be accepted as summarizing the condition of an underlying complex process.” (Smith & Baker, 2001, p, 141; cited in Gorur 2015)

All the international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) aim explicitly to influence policy and by that to policy-makers’, teachers’ and pupils’ behavior. One way they to do this is through reports and presentations targeted directly at policymakers and government officials. Another way is by disseminating information in the public domain through a range of media outlets. (Hamilton 2017, p, 281)

The ever-widening reach of ILSAs has the potential to assemble new educational realities and publics:

“This is not only directly through national policy reforms but also through the ways in which ILSAs enter public discourse and shape common sense understandings of what is valuable in education, what are the legitimate goals of education, who teachers and students are, what they should be doing and how it is possible to compare and know about the achievements, practices and agent’s behavior in different educational systems. International agencies and national actors alike are investing heavily in the creation of this new reality.” (Hamilton 2017, p, 282)

Research has documented several “knowledge networks” which have been formed in relation to ILSAs (see e.g. Grek, 2010), (Morgan, 2007), (Ozga & al., 2011). These networks include numerous private and public interest groups and publics: advocacy groups, policymakers, research bodies, commercial organisations, academics and what is important ultimately teachers, parents, students and the general public. Each of these groups has their own interests and priorities which shape their responses to ILSA findings.

There is no simple answer to the question, how ILSA is translated into policy reforms. There are important insights into the factors at play and the potential role of the media. Interested parties and publics emerge to actively manage the interpretation and circulation of survey results according to their own goals and priorities. Thus, even where the media coverage is substantial, interpretations of the findings and policy uptake are uncertain and the tangible policy reform is not guaranteed.

As Hamilton writes, the high status accorded to statistical expertise which is not available to ordinary citizens

“has its own logic and momentum. Lay publics are rendered incompetent by ILSAs and the complex survey data that have to be conveyed to them are seen to require translation into simpler, easy to understand content and forms. Specialized journalist and researcher training is developing to meet the demands of datification of policy and public discourse and is part of a spreading discourse of expertise with numbers to new sites.” (Hamilton, (2017, p, 290)

The analysis of ILSAs affect to the educational environments seem clear regardless of whether measured outcomes of student learning improve.

”These effects are produced along the way as publics and institutions learn to think about and compare their achievements in particular domains. In doing so, they channel political and policy imagination and action. The media and public discourses are entangled in this process which may ‘disorganize’ existing education systems in unintended ways as much as reform them along the recommended lines of international agencies.” (Hamilton 2017, p, 290)

## **7 Conclusion**

Globalization has been described as resulting in the rescaling of politics and policy (Lingard & Rawolle, 2010). This is complicated by the rise of a new mode of governance at a distance through QAE techniques and data, and the consequent positioning of the nation-states and local spaces. This all rests on the provision and translation of information about subjects, objects and processes and brings new limits and possibilities for agents and their behavior (cf. Hansen and

Flyverbom, 2014). The new architecture of governance relies on the production and mobility of data (Ball, 2016), (Clarke, 2012).

The globalization and Europeanisation, of educational policy involve not only language, concepts, classifications and preferences per se but “entangle in their webs a shared sequence of new cultural and political myths, sagas and beliefs, produced in a new space of meanings that swear allegiance to communality and progress”. At the same time, affected by those myths, our collective understanding of education as a whole and its relationship to concepts like equality, and social justice, or economy and culture is reshaped (Lawn and Lingard 2002, pp, 299-303), (Sultana, 2002), (Pereyra, 1993), (Rinne et al., 2002), (Simola et al., 2002), (Dale & al., 2016)

Among other international organizations (IOs), the OECD has become one of the major agent of the internationalizing, globalizing and thus converging education policy processes (Taylor & al., 1997), (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). While it is primarily concerned with economic policy, education has taken on increasing importance within that mandate of OECD, as it has been reframed as central to national economic competitiveness within an economistic human capital framework and linked to an emerging ‘knowledge economy’. The OECD has filled the niche of comparative evaluations in relation to education policy in terms of various kinds of indicators like in Education at a Glance and PISA. (Grek, 2009, p, 27)

Although there has been also criticism towards the ideas of “governance at a distance” as a general note, it is helpful to understand that the principles of calculability and measurability, usually used at the private sector, originating from economics, have been increasingly transferred to fields previously regulated by old bureaucratic statutes and professional norms, usually located in the public sector. Organizations that had previously been non-profit-making, for example universities and hospitals, began to be reshaped into little companies, the output of which was then evaluated and measured by different indicators.

(Rinne & Ozga 2011, p, 67)

In national education systems and policies there are the social facts, the already existing circumstances, which include and frame the possibilities for present and future actions, with some of them more powerful and significant than others. They are called the “opportunity structures”. They should be taken into account. (Dale, Kazepov, Rinne & Robertson, 2016)



The nation is “the space” or the “bounded sphere” and the basis of the national policies and “political culture” is a kind of “historic amalgam of national discursive traditions as well as heir to institutional forms and frameworks”. There are heavy historical bounds and the national education policy is strongly framed: “systems are anchored in territorial, material and linguistic determinations that cannot easily be circumvented, let alone dispensed with”. (Barbier 2008, p, 2; cited in Dale, Kazepov, Rinne & Robertson, 2016)

Romuald Normand (in press) has characterized three concurring trends in metrics for education policy. First is classification, by “bringing things closer and ordering the world”, which shapes and guides politics, based on “knowledge produced by statistics and data collection”. Secondly there is the development on a large scale experiments, which allow for building statistical series, used by experimental psychologists and economists to “qualify and classify populations according to different features and variables, and to prepare post-Welfare State politics.” Metrics serve to build large banks of data on ‘what works’” whose algorithmic treatments are considered sufficient to establish evidence-based reformist proposals”. Third, standardization is a policy through which, based on metrics, “the universe of practices is harmonized and subjected to standards or ‘best practices’, disregarding cultural and contextual differences”.

There is going on a huge invasion of politics of standardization. Standardization undoubtedly allows to build uniformity in time and space by creating common standards and establishing political control at a distance on work and communities of practice.

It is an aphorism that “we don’t just measure what we value, but that we come to value what we measure” (Gorur 2016, p, 602). Is it so, that the local and the national context as well as the individual student and all his or her complex behavior is lost? Are the complex social, cultural and political circumstances as well as the anxieties and excitements, and the goals and dreams and motivations and interests of 15-year-olds passed by? Have we standardized the whole complexity of national and local social facts as well as complexity of student? Have they simply become part of a yield or outcome measures. (Gorur, 2016), (Gorur, 2011)

The development of governalization by numbers and indicators and the management of efficiency has parallels with the current New Public Management (NPM). They share similarities in providing experts and policy-makers with new opportunities, change

relationships with local and national authorities and convert professions to new ways of thinking and accountability through standards. “They both use Taylorist mechanisms (like quality assurance procedures) and incentives (like performance-related pay) to pressure and surveil education professionals” (Ball, 2003), (Normand, in press).

This age can be called not only age of governance by numbers but also age of “Governance by Indicators”. Major intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the World Bank, UNESCO and the OECD produce a vast range of new indicators each year. Quantification has been ramped up to such an extent that we even have indicators for such intangible things as quality of life and happiness. The 2000s can be described as a decade of “obsession with performance indicators and the triumph of comparative psychometry” (Gorur, 2015). The launch and expansion of PISA reflects the rising importance of student attainment indicators.

Inevitable this world of ours is saturated with standards. They penetrate to all spheres of human life. Different kinds of evaluations, assessments, audits and quality assurance measures are all built upon an infrastructure of standards. Standards are not only ubiquitous, they are also normative. They create ideals and norms and normalities, but also the “less-than-ideal” and the abnormalities. “They produce social norms and encourage conformity to the ideal and dictate how things ought to be. They restrict decision-making possibilities, set parameters and narrow choice.” Standards also often incorporate standards of ethics, the breach of which may have legal and moral implications and sanctions. (Gorur, 2013, pp, 132-133)

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