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2. COMPARING ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY TOOLS AND RATIONALES¹

Various Ways, Various Effects?

INTRODUCTION

For twenty years, educational systems in numerous countries have been establishing national objectives and systems of indicators allowing them to “steer” the system, and to better “regulate” the processes and functioning of schools or governance bodies at the intermediate level. Moreover, procedures to evaluate schools’ results, and indirectly teachers’ work, are being developed, along with more or less demanding mechanisms for accountability. Thus, the school is increasingly subject to an obligation to produce certain results and performance established under various rubrics: accountability in English-speaking countries, “steering” based on external evaluation in continental Europe, and “results-based management” in Québec. In fact, these labels encompass a diversity of institutional arrangements and tools to establish policies, all part, however, of the same semantic realm, and of the same policy paradigm which considers school as a production system (Maroy & Mangez, 2011). Generically, these policies involve new modes of institutional regulation of educational systems, the principle of which is to steer and control the action on the basis of results (outputs of the production system). Most often they are superimposed on previous mechanisms bearing on “processes”, whether based on rules (bureaucratic regulation) or on professional norms (professional regulation) (Maroy, 2012).

We propose to initiate a discussion on the diversity of public action instruments and the institutional arrangements which define and operationalize these policies. Beyond their commonalities, their forms vary considerably, depending on their contexts. Thus, we present the hypothesis that the analysis of public authorities’ choice of public action instruments allows us to better discern the variations, significance and socio-political stakes inherent in these accountability policies.

This chapter is comprised of four parts. In the first, we will present characteristics common to accountability policies (AP). Subsequently, based on the academic and institutional literature, we will seek to create a typology of the diversity of institutional arrangements and public action instruments deployed in these policies. This typology is partially based on the configuration of established instruments, but also on differentiated theories of the process of regulation which implicitly or explicitly underlie policy orientations and their instruments. In the

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third section, we will present several cases of European (Scottish and Belgian) and North American (Québec and Texan) educational systems which illustrate the types just described. Finally, we will discuss some effects, stakes, limits and pitfalls of these policies not only from a functional and instrumental perspective but also from a critical and political one.

ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES OR RESULTS-BASED REGULATION

In the 1990s, under the influence of *New Public Management* (NPM) (Hood, 1991), we witnessed a transformative movement of the operational and regulatory modes of public service organizations. In particular, we saw the establishment of means of data collection and analysis at the level of the central government, which means the development of a calculating rationality (Bezes, 2005). In the educational field in particular, the state has become the evaluator and is no longer satisfied with checking that rules are respected or budgets are well adjusted to needs. Instead, it is developing more and more instruments to measure results and compare them to organisational targets and objectives. External evaluations are used with increasing frequency to steer policy, to “regulate” and guide the behaviour of intermediate and local actors (Broadfoot, 2000; Maroy, 2006a; Mons, 2009). This increase in evaluation also goes hand-in-hand with heightened clarification of curriculum and performance standards which must, at least theoretically, underlie the evaluations. Similarly, based on evidence or on the “best practices”, standards of professional practices and skills have come to frame the exercise of teaching itself. The measurement of systems’ results occupies a prominent position and is added to existing control and evaluation of educational systems’ resources and procedures. Thus, it is not merely a question of class size, teacher-student ratios, and resources allocated to the school, but also of student results and performance, as well as that of teachers, establishments, school districts or the educational system as a whole.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, these policies are labelled “accountability policies” to the extent that this notion has a broader meaning than that of “rendering accounts”, to designate instruments to improve the quality of public services. In a limited way indeed, “accountability can be defined as a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship” (Kogan, 1988, p. 25). In this sense, the English notion may be translated in French by the notions of *reddition de comptes* (rendering of accounts), *imputabilité* (being held to account) or even *responsabilisation* (assuming responsibility). This is nothing new in the field of education. Nonetheless, starting in the 1990s, under the influence of *New Public Management*, the notion of accountability has taken on a broader meaning and is now used in part to designate different types of mechanisms (both external and internal) for controlling and ensuring quality in public institutions and for making them sensitive to the citizens’ demands (such mechanisms may include the market, transparency, trust etc.) (Vesely, 2013, p. 329). According to this definition, accountability may then be understood as a

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collection of instruments aiming at the improvement of the quality of public services. It is in this sense that in the case of England, Patricia Broadfoot (2000, p. 44) speaks of *accountability* policies aiming to improve the quality of the English educational system through two principal means: first, the identification and assessment of the educational system's performance in relation to previously determined objectives; and then a "response by educational institutions, thanks to the control mechanism designed to track any gap between objectives and results". Carnoy and Loeb (2002) also speak of accountability policies to refer to policy associated with standards and rendering of accounts for the results of American states, which were developed before or after the federal policy of *No Child left Behind*.²

These various "accountability policies" are in fact intended to modify (lightly or deeply) the mix of modes of coordination, orientation and control put in place by the State and the educational authorities in order to orient the behaviours of local actors. In this sense there are policies about the (political) regulation within the education system.³ More precisely, we call them "regulation by results policies"; they share four common traits, if we examine them as a whole (Maroy, 2013). They simultaneously enact and reinforce a new policy paradigm whereby the school is conceived no longer as an institution, but rather as a "system of production" (Maroy & Mangez, 2011); operational objectives may be expressed in quantifiable data, which, in turn, become the "standards" and "targets" for the system – thus, everything is governed by "numbers" (Rose, 1991; Ozga, 2009); the various evaluation instruments for student testing are central, even though the modalities for implementing and using these evaluation tools may vary greatly as a function of contexts; and a variety of policy tools (contractual, financial, and regulatory) organize the "consequences" of accountability for individual or collective actors at different levels of the system.

These common traits of accountability policies may be coming closer to the principles of NPM, which have had a major influence on public administration reforms (Hood, 1995). However, beyond such commonalities, these policies differ depending on their contexts, the instruments chosen by educational systems to implement them, the conceptions of the actor, and the regulation theories underlying them (Mons & Dupriez, 2010).

ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES: A TYPOLOGY

Here, we propose a typology of the diversity of institutional arrangements and public action instruments employed in various educational systems. Drawn from a reading of the institutional and academic literature, the typology proposed rests primarily on four dimensions: two bear on the characteristics of policy tools deployed to implement the policies (the degree to which measures are aligned, and the stakes for the actors); and two others bear on the nature of regulation theories employed and implicit in the use of these tools (the conception of the actor inherent in the policy, and the theory of the regulation process involved by the policy tools).

The Constituent Dimensions

Thus our procedure aims to construct a typology of “ideal types” in a Weberian perspective with the intention of making sense of accountability policies, starting with the instruments used to implement them. Therefore this is not a descriptive typology, bringing together a number of similar cases in an inductive fashion according to certain dimensions, even though we will illustrate each of these ideal types with a specific case.⁴

The first dimension of this typology is the degree to which the various regulatory tools are aligned, both with one another and with different levels of the educational system. Thus, there can be more or less alignment of the different component standards (concerning the curriculum, evaluation, performance, skills or educational “best practices”) of accountability policies. In this case, they will be able to serve as reference points in the evaluation and orientation of local practices and benchmarks for the “steering” of central educational policies. In contrast, weak alignment involves instruments which are loosely coupled with one another or with the levels of the system. A second dimension, much discussed in the literature, is the nature of consequences associated with measures and tools of *accountability*. Subsequent to the evaluation results, the consequences of a “hard” accountability system (Dupriez & Mons, 2011) or one with “high stakes” (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Harris & Herrington, 2000) will be considered in terms of incentives and constraints: financial consequences (salary bonuses, etc.), career management (promotion, transfer, firing, etc.), and external reputation (public rankings of schools, etc.), presupposing strategic actors, sensitive to their interests and the context. In “soft” or “reflexive” accountability systems (Dupriez & Mons, 2011) or in other words in those with “low” stakes (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Harris & Herrington, 2006; Mons, 2009), the consequences associated with accountability could vary markedly. This would be a matter of enjoining the organization or the professional to confront their results, to use various measures to favour reflexivity about their practices, and beyond this to foster changes in practices, beliefs or identities (Mons & Dupriez, 2011).⁵

Two other dimensions which bear on the theory, often implicit, of regulation underpinning policies⁶ are also taken into account. This notion must be understood in a sense close to that of change theory as developed by Muller (2000). Regulation theories are often embedded in the policy tools (PT) which operationalize the policy (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2004). Public policies and their instruments are thus seen as carrying a worldview, a particular conception of actors and of social reality on which they intervene, as techniques, means of operating. These policy tools (PT) seek to guide the behaviour of actors in the light of certain finalities of action. The regulation theories are thus not necessarily made explicit in a developed discourse, although this may also be the case.⁷

If we consider regulation as the “process of production of rules and the directing of actors’ conduct in a specific social space” (Maroy & Dupriez, 2000, p. 74), the regulation theory in use in policies thus involves, on the one hand, the conception of the actor affected by the regulation and, on the other hand, the external or

internal character of measures or dispositions by which an educational authority seeks to impact a local actor.

Thus regarding the first dimension of these regulation theories, the actors must be considered as moved primarily either by a “rational” or “utilitarian” logic, or by a “reflexive” and socially situated logic. In the former case, it is a question of an actor with a calculating rationality, although this is limited, situated and contingent, as modeled in the rational action theory (Coleman, 1990). The actor is sensitive to constraints which are often external and which may change the direction of their action, given particular interests and preferences. Thus, the teacher could be motivated by salary bonuses, while the establishment could be seen as an organization sensitive to external pressures.⁸ In the second case, the actor is conceived as “reflexive” but also as culturally and socially constructed by their past, their education, their organisational or professional position. The actions of individuals (for example, in the school system) are embedded in institutions and influenced by them. They draw on cognitive patterns, acquired habits, and normative models which guide them. Self-interest is not the sole motor of action – “social obligations” also drive action. In other words, action is based on culturally constructed and shared cognitive patterns (Scott, 1995; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006). Within this intellectual framework, the improvement and change in practices of the school actors can be conceived as the results of reflection on their practices and results of their action, as an individual or collective learning process (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1995). Regulation, therefore, consists of a series of institutional arrangements favouring this reflexivity and this “situated” learning at an individual or collective level. This conception of the actor may be seen in the choices and content of instruments which serve to operationalize the policy.

The second analytical dimension of the regulation theory in use concerns the very nature of the mediation on which the regulation is based. Drawing inspiration from Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), we may thus situate the institutional arrangements of accountability and assuming responsibility as stemming from their more or less intensive recourse to external devices (*dispositifs externes*) or, conversely, as acting on internal dispositions (*dispositions internes*) of the actor – that is, on the actor’s internal cognitive and normative patterns, or in Bourdieu’s term the *lasting, acquired schemes of perception, thought and action*. In other words, on the one hand, the theory of policy action makes external measures, whether supporting or controlling the action, key mediating factors in the process of regulation. External measures are the pragmatic supports that tend to condition the orientation of individual or collective conduct from the outside. On the other hand, greater importance is given to the “interiority” of actors, the ethos and internalized dispositions of local actors, as key vectors and mediations in the process of improving school performance (Mangez, 2001). A policy mix would be possible in the form of joint recourse to external measures (for example, high stake external testing for schools) associated with expectations about a change of actors’ dispositions (positive attitude toward quality, improvement, self-evaluation, etc.) or practices, in conjunction with these external measures. This would be one issue of

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the so-called “self-evaluation” policy coupling external devices and social control, together having an impact on local actors’ cognitive and normative dispositions.

Overall, the policy tools chosen emphasize either formal measures of rendering of accounts, with various material or symbolic stakes for local actors, or policies expecting or favouring the actor’s “internal” assumption of responsibility. Moreover, both policy tools could be combined. Thus, here, we return to two dimensions which comprise the notion of accountability in the Anglo-Saxon tradition and appear in its twofold translation in French: on the one hand, *reddition de comptes* (formal “accountability” or rendering of accounts) and, on the other, *responsabilisation* (that is to say, the expectation that the actor should assume his or her responsibility, the assumption of a moral, civic or professional responsibility). (For a discussion of this, see Ranson, 2003.)

Four Approaches to Regulation and Accountability

Thus we present four types of logic underlying the instruments of accountability and the policies established in various educational systems (see [Table 1](#)).

1. An approach to regulation through “hard” accountability. Involving serious consequences for the actors, coupling and aligning closely various policy tools, it is based on a conception of the utilitarian and strategic actor, thus one sensitive to external constraints. Regulatory action occurs through measures external to the actors (aligning closely different devices, such as curriculum standards and evaluation standards). This involves a highly developed information and performance evaluation system, associated with a control system: targets for everyone, evaluation of the results (“high” stakes testing of the pupils, and indirectly of schools and teachers); reports to be made by them on their results, (support and control for failing actors related to “high stakes” consequences for them). Regulation occurs through a formal external framework with serious consequences for the main actors (school, teacher, pupil), while there is no a priori attempt to make changes from the inside. Prime examples are Texas and England (Broadfoot, 2000; Ozga, 2009).

2. An approach to regulation through neo-bureaucratic accountability with respect to the results. This stems from a utilitarian conception of the actor, and also emphasizes a regulation based on a close alignment of the various tools and different levels of action. External procedures take the form of control and evaluation measures of results of the action. The stress is on formal accountability to higher authorities, but here the consequences of these external measures are not “high stakes”. As with the former approach, the regulation operates through actors’ sensitivity to the constraints, resources and incentives which condition their action from the outside, without calling for internal change, thus, without personal beliefs or values being affected. In this sense, the regulatory action remains bureaucratic (Le Galès & Scott, 2008). Furthermore, given the fact that the stakes related to the external measures are not high, some external forms of conformity are practicable.

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Regulation is externally imposed through accountability measures, without actors' moral assumption of responsibility being targeted by the policy. The province of Québec's education policy seems close to this approach.

3. A regulation approach through reflective responsabilization and accountability.

The consequences are dramatic or moderate for individuals and organizations, and instruments and levels of action remain closely aligned. At the same time, the action of policy regulation does not only occur through external measures but also mobilizes actors' internal dispositions. Thus, this approach is based on various devices framing the end results or means of action (standards with respect to curriculum, evaluation, and skills), but also on sophisticated measures of data production and the evaluation of processes and results of the action. Inspection and control measures remain vigorous, but are also accompanied by support measures. At the same time, cognitive and normative dispositions "internal to the actors" are effectively mobilized in the "self-evaluation" processes, which no longer bear only on the results of the action, but also relate to the processes of change, of learning and of improvement of results. This approach is made clearly visible through accountability measures established in Scotland (Ozga & Grek, 2012), Ontario (Chang, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007; Jaafar & Anderson, 2007) and even the district of Chicago (Byrk, 2003). Some school councils in Québec are applying this approach in their jurisdiction, thus going beyond the formal expectations of the province policy.

4. A regulation approach through "soft" accountability.

For individuals or local organizations, rendering accounts on their results means "low stakes", minor material or social consequences. In addition, the alignment of tools and standards is looser, both between the levels of action and between the instruments themselves. If this situation prevails, it is because regulation theory is based primarily on a conception of local actors, assumed to be reflective and socially inclined (by their ethos, training, and professional socialization) to improve their practices in the direction expected by educational authorities. If regulation operates through the deployment of external measures with the actors (notably evaluation and support), it relies even more on an impact on the actors' perceptions (through the mirror that test results give to each of them). It counts on the dispositions of local school actors to be involved in an exercise of reflection on their practices, stemming from better knowledge through evaluation of their students' results. Furthermore, this reliance on local actors' internalized dispositions can be strengthened by the implementation of actions combining support and control to various degrees. This approach is that favoured in French-speaking Belgium and in France (Mons & Pons, 2006; Mons & Dupriez, 2011; Dutercq & Cuculou, 2013).

Table 1. Four approaches to regulation by results

	Regulation through “hard” accountability	Regulation through neo-bureaucratic accountability	Regulation through reflective responsabilization and accountability	Regulation through “soft” accountability
Stakes of accountability	High	Variable: moderate to low	Moderate	Low
Alignment of tools and levels of action	Major	Major	Major	Moderate to minor
Conception of the actor	Utilitarian	Utilitarian	Reflective and socially situated	Reflective and socially situated
Central mediation for the expected change	External devices (information, evaluation, control, support in case of a problem)	External devices (information, evaluation, control and support)	External devices (information, evaluation, control and support) and actors’ dispositions	Actors’ dispositions, evaluation and support measures
Emphasis on rendering of accounts/ assumption of responsibility	Accent on the rendering of accounts	Accent on the rendering of accounts	Accent on the assumption of responsibility	Accent on the assumption of responsibility
Examples	Texas, England	Québec	Ontario, Scotland	Belgium, France

THE INSTRUMENTAL APPROACHES OF ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES:
FOUR EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

We will now document and illustrate each of these approaches stemming from accountability policies and tools developed in several educational systems. The following cases are particularly representative of each of the types presented: Texas, Québec, Scotland and French-speaking Belgium.

Regulation through “Hard” Accountability: The Case of Texas

In the 1990s, Texas was the first American educational system to set in place an accountability system with high stakes, a policy driven by Governor Ann Richards (1984 and 1987) and continued by her successor, George W. Bush. This strict accountability (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002) combines state-wide standardized tests at various scholastic levels (3, 8, and 10); the publication of aggregate results for

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students, schools and districts; the ranking of schools and districts in the light of these results; and major repercussions for all the actors – districts, school administrators, establishments, and teachers (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002). The *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills* (TAAS), introduced in 1990-1991 as a requirement for graduation, was extended in 1994 to other education levels. It is aligned with curriculum and performance standards established by the *Texas Education Agency*, an agency playing a major role in the Texan accountability system. Tasked with the evaluation of teachers and students, certification of the latter and the definition of standards governing access to the teaching profession, amongst other things, it collects and publishes information on district and school performance, based on student performance in standardized evaluations. In 1993, the TAAS became the centre point of an accountability system with serious ramifications for students, schools and districts. In 1994, school principals in the Houston district started to face major consequences for establishments' performances, a model which spread into other districts in Texas. These consequences include financial incentives, career advancement, and personnel changes as a function of the performance of their establishments (salary bonuses, the recomposition of management personnel in these establishments, and changes or firing of heads of establishments and of teachers).

According to McNeil, Coppola, Radigan and Vasquez Heilig (2008), the system of accountability in Texas is "an extreme form of centralized management with a strict hierarchy in which rules and sanctions are set at the top, with every level of the system accountable to the level above it for measurable performance" (p. 3). It is based on a model of hierarchical control and management: at the heart of the system is the use of statistical data, and the monitoring of teacher, establishment and district performance on the basis of their results. The alignment of all the echelons of the system, with a focus on standardized objectives and actors' accountability at these different action levels, is organized via a collection of external measures, with sanctions playing a major role.

The Texan system may be considered a precursor in terms of high-stakes accountability based on a collection of instruments external to the actors. These include standards, informational and communication instruments, performance contracts, incentives and sanctions. In addition, this system favours the alignment of structures and professional practices stemming from external measures which underpin actors' accountability for the results of their actions. The action theory behind these public action instruments favours a model of homo strategicus/economicus, with a presumption that strategic actors are sensitive to their own interests and to the constraints or resources affecting them. Measures external to actors must encourage them to change pedagogical or managerial practices deemed ineffective. While the emphasis is primarily on the system results, support measures for schools (professional development, and support for managers or teachers) are not a priority in these accountability systems although they are planned for, with the goal of improving the performance of the teachers. Despite the fact that the Texan system plans for both support measures and those measures to exert pressure on the actors, the focus appears to be more on the

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presence of external measures exercising pressure on actors in the educational field.

Regulation through Neo-Bureaucratic Accountability: The Case of Québec

In Québec the last fifteen years have been marked by the emergence of a policy referred to as “results-based management” (RBM). With the passing of Law 82 in 2000, this “new public management” was imposed on all governmental departments. In the decade that followed, Law 124 (2002) and Law 88 (2008) introduced RBM to organizations in the school network. A movement of recentralization (Desjardins & Lessard, 2011), along with a strategy of alignment of different layers of the system through mechanisms of contractualization and strategic planning, now connects each level to its superior level (establishments, school boards, and the ministry), integrating the measurable performance indicators and objectives established at the higher level. Quantitative data plays a major role (Mons & Pons, 2006), being drawn upon and invested in heavily by actors in developing strategic planning documents directed towards numerical targets and accountability based on the latter. Thus, school results are now the preferred focus of a formal rendering of accounts. However, the Québec system of results-based regulation does not plan for clear sanctions with respect to the attainment of fixed objectives.⁹

The Québec accountability system in its current form is, therefore, based on various elements: strategic alignment, planning and contractualization, and vertical hierarchical and bureaucratic accountability. It is also based on the local or regional community. Indeed, the new RBM instruments are superimposed on older tools (the establishment’s board, and the educational plan), which were not eliminated and had been set up with a very different concern for accountability, which could be characterized, as Leithwood and Earl (2000) suggest, as “community-oriented”.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the new instruments tighten higher authorities’ control over the results with a *top-down* approach, and tend to downplay/underestimate the horizontal and community accountability relations which preceded them (Brassard, 2009). This leads us to classify the Québec accountability approach as neo-bureaucratic, to the extent that the main instruments in use are “external and vertical measures”, implemented to align the lower echelons with the measurable objectives of higher levels. Furthermore, in the law, there are no calls or support for the development of an assumption of responsibility by local actors (notably local management and teachers), which would occur through internal processes (for example, measures of sensitization/information, of training, of support, etc.). This mediation through internal processes is, in fact, left to the discretion of the school boards and is not formally integrated into national policy. The aspect in common with Texas is the action through external measures, but they are different in nature, since in Québec there is no emphasis on serious financial incentives or constraints, whether organizational or professional, but rather on the deployment of tools based on bureaucratic accountability practices in relation to the results. Regulation theory is, therefore, based on a conception of utilitarian actors sensitive

to the external rules and bureaucratic controls designed to encourage them to reposition their action. However, some school councils in Québec could go beyond the formal expectations of the province policy; taking advantage of their relative autonomy, they could adopt an approach close to the next type.¹¹

Regulation through Reflective Responsibilization and Accountability: The Case of Scotland

In Scotland, the development of *School Self Evaluation* (SSE), vigorously promoted by the Scottish inspectorate, considerably coloured and distinguished “the policy of standards” which was implemented there. In 1991, the inspectorate strongly recommended the use of school development planning, notably including statistical tools allowing for the evaluation of schools’ performances and a comparison by subject within each school, as well as a comparison with national data (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001, as cited in Croxford, Grek, & Shaik, 2009, p. 182). In 1996, the process (and procedures) of SSE and planning for school development in the light of external standards were formalized with the publication of *How Good is Our School? Self-Evaluation Using Performance Indicators* by the Scottish inspection services (*Scottish Office Education and Industry Department*, SOEID, 1996, as cited in Croxford, Grek, & Shaik, 2009). The SSE was thus governed by restrictive procedures or qualitative and quantitative standards framing the self-evaluation of educational processes and team management of schools, under the responsibility of the headteachers. It is not merely a question of schools being accountable for their results, but also of involving different actors in and around the production of information and knowledge, which could contribute to the attainment of the stated objectives. Development plans are considered mechanisms allowing for the planning of change. They constitute support in terms of school improvement through the deployment of indicators established by superior authorities, in a process of self-evaluation which consequently becomes an element in the practice of teachers, heads of establishments, and school administrators (Ozga & Grek, 2012, p. 44).

This managerial logic based on performance involves monitoring performances at different levels of action in an educational system described as “a national system, locally administered” (Scottish Executive, 1999, as cited in Ozga & Grek, 2012, p. 42). The inspectorate also plays a key role: examination and control of school results and statistics and their processes of self-evaluation, establishment of support measures for the process of self-evaluation and for the improvement of establishments’ performances, and support and intervention with school managers and educational teams.

The Scottish system of results-based regulation plans for a range of central instruments: curriculum standards, standardized tests, data base stemming from the analysis of their results, communication tools to publish establishment and intermediate bodies’ results. Furthermore instruments have been developed to monitor districts’ and schools’ performances. Moreover, a strict system of incentives and sanctions, as well as support measures for schools in difficulty,

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exists. Support takes the form of interventions by external actors, who must assist establishments in the process of *Self-Evaluation* to improve their performances. Thus inducing actors to assume responsibility occurs through the implementation of both external measures and internal means, since intervention resulting from support measures must allow for an improvement in management practices and educational agents' professional practices. But there is not only a focus on external devices and constraints on local actors. This process is also intended to encourage the learning processes of professionals and administrators, leading to other ways of thinking and acting through internalization of the criteria on which these actors are evaluated (according to their performance). In other words, a self-evaluation process is expected. Therefore, the focus is, on the one hand, on the actors' assumption of responsibility for the results and, on the other hand, on their capacity for reflexivity with respect to their professional practices. One might hypothesize that the action theory underlying the application of these instruments supposes a more reflexive actor, although one sensitive to external incentives.

Regulation through "Soft" Accountability: The Case of French-Speaking Belgium

For fifteen years, in French-speaking Belgium, we have witnessed the development of an external evaluation and accountability policy for establishments (Maroy & Mangez, 2011). This encompasses the development of external end-of-year examinations and diagnostic evaluations of students' knowledge; the establishment of "pedagogical markers" in terms of skills to be attained at different levels of education; the homogenization of evaluation frames of reference; and the creation of various transversal pedagogical frames of reference within networks and relative to the skills teachers need to master (Draelants, Dupriez, & Maroy, 2011). Since 2002, external diagnostic tests have been systematically organized for all students of a particular year. These tests both make a contribution to the regulation of the educational system as a whole, and provide information to teachers on the performance of their students, offering them "didactic paths" to employ in the classroom to enhance learning. Moreover, in 2006 a standardized end-of-the-year exam in sixth grade was developed, followed in 2009 by a standardized end-of-the-year external test at the end of the second year of high school.

However, despite the development of these centralized tools (curriculum standards, evaluation frames of reference, and systematic and recurrent external evaluations), the autonomy of educational authorities and establishments remains significant in terms of management and pedagogy, at least formally. As for external evaluations, they are subject to a two-fold monitoring by the system. On the one hand, the results of the external evaluation *may* be used as a tool for "micro-steering" by the school's management; on the other hand, the staff of the inspection service have the vocation to inspect schools, and they have the opportunity to link pedagogical practices to both the legal framework and the expected and observed "performance" level, with regard to competencies defined as pedagogical objectives. In the case of a "perceived deficiency", the inspector must notify the educational authorities concerned, who are then responsible for

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ensuring an improvement without, nonetheless, planning sanctions or consequences, either for the organization or the individual actor (Maroy, 2009).

Also in French-speaking Belgium, the “light” regulation system is partially based on setting up curriculum and performance standards and on a relatively well developed measure of standardized evaluations in the pursuit of various ends, related to diagnosis, end-of-year exams, and the steering of the system (Eurydice, 2009). These measures are, nevertheless, not well developed with a system of incentives and sanctions organized through regulatory and legal instruments. In fact, this accountability stems from the postulate that actors in the educational field are encouraged to review and revise their professional practices when confronted with evaluation results. The system is based on an action theory favouring reflexive actors capable of adjusting their professional practice, without the intervention of a system of sanctions or incentives. The external evaluation measures informing the actors of the results of their actions are supposed to operate as external stimuli, provoking a reflection on their action and results. Above all, these are internal measures of local actors (the ethos of teachers and management in their search for success for their students, and their technical skills), which are supposed to favour this reflection and the subsequent improvement of management or educational practices, actions bolstered (in various ways) by support measures or training. Few incentives are envisaged to “mobilize” the actors. Furthermore, the dimension of control and alignment of public action instruments remains relatively weak, because the link between objectives and standards of reference at the central level and local practices is mediated by actors’ internal processes more than by external measures.

ACCOUNTABILITY STAKES AND EFFECTS FOR SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

We would now like to establish some links between these policies and their effects and the stakes for school and society. It is difficult to establish a clear consensus among findings and a comprehensive picture of the effects of accountability policies (AP) for many reasons. First, empirical studies are conducted from various theoretical and epistemological perspectives. Secondly, empirical evaluations are often restricted to certain areas: in particular, many comparative studies have been focused on the effect of the “high stakes” accountability systems within the USA, while fewer studies have been developed in “soft accountability” or “reflective accountability” systems. Therefore we can only present some hypotheses.

Moreover, there are two main perspectives on the effects of accountability policies. First of all, there is an *internal* perspective adopting the objectives of these policies as evaluation criteria. School is a kind of production system and research evaluates how far accountability policies reach their objectives: how good are they for better performance, how good are they for greater equity in the school system? Secondly, there is an *external* point of view, put forward by a critical sociology, debating the legitimacy of these policies, their social meaning, the new power relations they favour. These critical researchers question the policies from two angles: first they look at the normative principles behind the policies,

discussing their social acceptability or relevance. Indeed they can challenge the legitimacy of these accountability policies. Secondly, they focus on the relations of power that these new regulations tend to generate or reinforce. In other words, these types of research look at the long term consequences of these policies.

Internal Perspective: Impact on Effectiveness and Equity

There are controversies arising from US studies concerning the effect of various “accountability” tools on pupils’ achievement (especially through comparison of “high vs. low stakes” policies). These empirical studies have been conducted through longitudinal or macro-statistics research, often based on the NAEP test (National Assessment of Educational Progress; US) or some state-driven test (i.e., TAAS: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills), or district-driven tests (Chicago, New York). Three major results could be put forward about the efficacy of accountability systems on average achievements of pupils:

- 1) the introduction of *accountability systems* has a weak influence on the progress of average pupils scores (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Figlio & Loeb, 2011);
- 2) authors are of different opinions on the mechanism of *accountability producing the improvement of the results*. According to the Figlio and Loeb meta analysis (2011), many studies show that progress in the results in math and literacy is related to high stake testing for the pupils; according also to Harris and Herrington (2006), a positive influence could also be related to curriculum standards and the presence of an external end-of-year testing producing high pressure on pupils and low pressure on schools. However for Ravitch (2010) these gains are weak and related to a reduction of the “curricular spectrum” and to a practice that leads to “teaching to the test”;
- 3) the effectiveness seems to be related to the subject (stronger effect in math) and there is no stability of the results over time (Lee, 2008).

Concerning equity, the introduction of high stake accountability policy has a negative effect on equity and often widens the performance gap between various ethnic groups, especially between black and other groups (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005; Harris & Herrington, 2006; Mons, 2013). According to Lee (2008), there is no reduction of the gaps between ethnic or socio-economic groups. According to Mons (2013), however, only the standardized external test has a positive effect on equity.

In the end, we have to emphasize the fact that there are many controversies arising from US studies and that few studies focus on the “unintended” effects of these policies. Few scientific studies have been developed in Europe on the effectiveness of other types of accountability policies, either on pupils’ average scores or inequalities. We can observe a slow rise of the average score in various subjects in Scotland (Pisa test), and there is a slow improvement in literacy (Fr Belgium, Pisa scores). But it is impossible to know the exact causes of these developments and to relate them to accountability policies. So it is impossible to compare, from an “effectiveness perspective”, the various types of accountability policies presented in this chapter.

The Critical Perspective: Various Effects of AP on Normativity or Power Relations

We turn now to the sociological criticism, the *external* critical appraisals of accountability policies, especially those of hard or high stake accountability. These studies highlight various normative changes that these accountability policies (by and large) favour, normative changes concerning teaching or the curriculum on the one hand, and the school administration on the other.

With regard to the former, let us focus on three main negative effects of AP policies.

- Instrumental reduction of the curriculum taught: as Ravith and others (Mons, 2013) put it, there is a narrowing of the attention of pupils and teachers to the subjects (math, literacy, sciences) actually assessed by external tests. Moreover, there is the reinforcement of a strategic attitude toward schooling, which is illustrated by the development of various forms of “teaching to the test”.
- Osborne et al. (2000) also show in English primary schools how the affective/humanistic dimension of teaching/learning relations could be challenged by the search for effectiveness. Socio-affective development could sometimes be made secondary to cognitive objectives.
- Finally, Hargreaves (2003) underlines the loss of creativity and open collective work; there is less room for individual or local curriculum choices; less time for cooperation, due to a unilateral focus on achievements and tests to pass (in Ontario).

With regard to the administration at the school level, Gewirtz (2002) in England and Barrère (2006) in France show that there is a move from “public service” orientation to a “managerial” or a “market” ethos especially, among headteachers and principals.

These critical studies introduce no distinction between various types or rationales of accountability policies. However, we can hypothesize that most of their conclusions are plausible for the first three types of accountability policies, due to the presence of formal mechanisms of the rendering of accounts about results, and due also, to the focus on “cognitive” results that these types share, regardless of their “theory of regulation” or their conception of actor.

The shift in the managerial ethos of principals, the technicist orientation of teaching, even the loss of creativity could appear more prominent in the third type (“reflective responsabilization and accountability”) due to the fact that these policies try to change actors from the inside, to adapt them to a new regime of performativity, which is not the case in the “soft accountability” regime on the one hand, or in “hard” and “neo-bureaucratic” type of policies on the other.

Numerous research papers also explore the effects and impacts of AP in terms of power relations between actors or between levels of action. Four types of relations are concerned:

- 1) One of the reasons for the justification of AP is that they are thought to favour the end of decoupling between teaching practices in the classroom and the devices or formal structures of school organization, which makes policies relatively ineffective (Meyer & Scott, 1983).

- Some of the literature (Spillane et al., 2006) argues that the new AP are proving decoupling theories to be wrong, and that they contribute to re-coupling teaching practices with the guidelines advocated by “managers” or policy makers.
 - In contrast, other authors insist that AP also produce decoupling and have no effect on teaching practices for two reasons: 1) development of new specialists or services dedicated to the “management of appearances” and the external image of the institution, which tend to produce “artefacts” to respond to formal requests from evaluators (for example, accountability reports). Evaluation reports depend heavily on “self-staging” strategies set up by educational teams to protect themselves against the effects of control. In fact, decoupling between “image management” practices and actual practices in classrooms and schools, according to these authors, persist (Ball, 2003); 2) the manipulation of figures and/or tests as cheating practices, exclusion of weak pupils who could lower the school or class results (Lee, 2010).
- 2) Uneven symbolic effects depending on the position of the school and its student population: “well-off” schools are more inclined to welcome testing and accountability, than “disadvantaged” schools, who see the standards as out of reach (stigmatising, demoralizing effect) while sometimes the authorities may be more demanding towards them (Hargreaves, 2003).
 - 3) New modes of regulation of the education system are accompanied by the development of increased control of teachers’ work, in various direct and indirect forms. This trend is evidenced by the work of Nathalie Mons (2008). She shows, from a database of Eurydice, that in many European educational contexts we see the development of: 1) control in various forms, from the traditional inspection of individual teaching processes, self- evaluation, interviews with the principal, to schools being audited 2) assessment of learning outcomes, contrasting with the traditional assessment of processes.
 - 4) The risk of de-professionalization: professionalization is not just a matter of expertise and mastery over complex and uncertain tasks – it is also the ability of a group to set/negotiate their employment conditions, the content of their work, partially insulated from the pressure of customers/users, or managers (Freidson, 2001). The current balance of power is not benefiting teachers. There is an ongoing loss of power and de-professionalization of teachers, favouring either parents or school managers (Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, & Cribb, 2008). There is also a risk of redefinition of professionalism: it is no longer professionalism in the full sense, which involves both autonomy in decision-making and reflection, and also ethical autonomy which may lead to questioning the orientations of policies. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a managerial professionalism is developing: autonomy and expertise are expected on means and processes, while goals and normative orientations of education no longer belong mainly to teachers. Goals are supposed to be a political choice which has been made by policy makers in a democratic way (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz, 2002; Maroy, 2006b).

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We can hypothesize that these various trends could be developed unevenly across the different types of AP we have distinguished. For example, the reduction of school decoupling (policy/organisational management vs. classroom/teaching) could be especially true for type I and III but we can expect that school decoupling could still be present in types II and IV. Furthermore, the rise of control over teachers and de-professionalization trends could especially be true for types I and III (more precisely, some managerial forms of teachers' professionalism could be expected in these cases).

CONCLUSION

Results-based regulation policies vary according to contexts, and they deploy diverse public action instruments with specific effects. We have sought to develop a blueprint to understand policies stemming from the instruments deployed and the regulation theories that they incorporate. This has led to our highlighting four approaches to regulation: regulation through "hard" accountability (called "high stakes accountability" in the literature); a neo-bureaucratic approach to accountability; another based both on a "reflective" answerability and formal accountability; and, finally, regulation through "soft" accountability, soft responsabilization (called "low stakes accountability" in the literature). These four ideal-typical approaches have been illustrated in the case of various educational systems in Texas, Québec, Scotland and French-speaking Belgium.

From our perspective, a number of dimensions are inherent in these approaches. First, there is the matter of the alignment between regulatory instruments and that between action levels, and second, there is the nature and importance of the stakes which actors involved in accountability relations face. The other two dimensions take the regulation theories underpinning new accountability policies into consideration. Thus, certain policies rely, above all, on external devices and measures putting external pressure on actors (individual or collective) to be held to account for tangible results. This pressure may be exercised more or less severely, depending on the importance of the stakes associated with these formal devices. This regulation theory relying on external devices goes together with a conception of actors as strategically sensitive to external constraints. Other policies, in contrast, are based primarily on the regulation occurring through and within actors. They may act simply to change the actors' "perception" or cognition, by mirroring to them the results of their action (notably through quantitative and objective data on the knowledge and competencies mastered by their students), so that they reflect self-critically on possible improvements they could make (soft accountability). The regulation theory, nevertheless, may involve changing not only actors' knowledge and perceptions of their results, but also, more profoundly, the beliefs and convictions underlying their routines and professional practices. In this case, the regulatory action may also induce a reworking of professional identities (notably actors' conception of professionalism, their relationship and their power to act on students' success, their conception of their own professional development, of team

work, etc.). The actor is viewed in a more cognitive manner (reflexive actor) but also more “sociologically”, as part of, in fact mired in, various forms of routines or institutions. Accountability policies (for example, in Scotland) are led by a theory of regulation which combines the regulatory tools aiming to change the “inner dispositions” of the actor (*régulation par l'intériorité des acteurs*) with external pressure on him or her, supported by external measures (*régulation par l'externalité des dispositifs*). They integrate demand for formal rendering of accounts and actors' internal answerability.

Thus, through the construction of this typology, we have sought to develop a blueprint to understand the regulation theories underlying results-based regulation policies. Our analytical procedure did not intend to offer a comprehensive empirical description of policies applied in various contexts for two reasons. On the one hand, the institutional and academic literature available to document the policies and their instruments is unevenly developed and we cannot document each policy to the same extent; on the other hand, we have mainly stressed the orientations of their formal and central policies. A limitation of our chapter is thus that this description of formal policies has not been enriched by more detailed accounts of their actual implementation by local schools and actors. This means, by way of consequence, that the actual accountability policy in each educational system should not be reduced to the ideal type we have presented. An analysis of the implementation of educational accountability instruments in various contexts should be conducted to complete the picture we have made.

Moreover, the reality of accountability policies is a changing one. As an illustration, we can observe the growing criticism to which “hard” accountability policies are subject, and their evolution towards a more reflective approach of accountability or to *self-evaluation* (Ozga, 2009). The balance between pressure and support seems to be a key element at the heart of the new emerging accountability policies, and by extension, their characterization. Thus, Normand and Derouet (2011) defend the idea that in a number of countries (England and New Zealand, for example), approaches to these policies are shifting from a “hard” policy of accountability towards an “*obligation de résultats intelligente*”, where the emphasis is increasingly on the process of change as much as on the results. This involves in particular the development of so-called “support” instruments and not only simply “pressure” mechanisms. This means, therefore, that the policies may also evolve as a function of experts and political decision makers, weighing up the undesirable effects or the limitations of the regulation theories underlying established policies.

Moreover, there are also the effective conditions of their implementation, the mediation of actors and organisations which develop them and put them into practice, and the various interpretations or the strategic opposition to which they give rise amongst management or teachers – all of which might form the effective source of the real orientation of these policies in action. Not only might this condition their application, their modifications and effective recontextualization, but it could also affect the conditions of their effectiveness and legitimacy. In

addition, this may ultimately impact their sustainability, their modification or their progressive abandonment.

NOTES

- ¹ Christian Maroy is a full professor at University of Montreal (UdeM), chair of the CRCEP. Annelise Voisin is a Phd student in education at the CRCEP, UdeM. A first version of this chapter was presented at a symposium organised by Y. Dutercq at the Université de Nantes (June 2013) and has been published in French by *Education comparée* (2014, 11). Many thanks to Cecile Mathou for her comments on this revised and extended version in English. This chapter has been made possible due to a grant (435-2012-0701) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- ² We are inclined to speak of new accountability, meaning the relation of accountability (in the limited sense) that these policies favour, for two reasons: on the one hand the object of the accountability becomes wider with the results of the action and is no longer limited to its legality, its means or its orientations. Moreover, the actor to whom one is accountable expands; accountability is no longer simply to the local administrative authorities but also to the state government (in the US case), which demonstrates the rise in the stakes involved. Here, we come back to the article by Maroy and Voisin (2013) which discusses earlier forms of accountability and the shift towards a new accountability at the beginning of the first decade of this century.
- ³ Regulation is here to be understood in a broad sense (as in the French term *régulation*, which is broader than the formal regulation in English, translated by *règlementation* in French); we take the view that ‘social regulation’ denotes multiple, contradictory and sometimes conflicting processes for orienting the behaviours of actors and defining the rules of the game in a social system (Reynaud, 1993; Dupriez & Maroy, 2003; Maroy & Van Zanten, 2009). Political regulation relates to modes of orientation, coordination and control of actors by public authorities. These modes have been objectivized and institutionalized not only in legal mechanisms (in this case, political regulation essentially means formal or statutory regulation) but also, more recently, in incentive, evaluation, emulation and consultation mechanisms (benchmarking, good practices, school clusters). Accountability policies are in this sense examples of political regulation.
- ⁴ As Schnapper (1999, p. 15) effectively demonstrates, for Max Weber “the ideal type is not a description of reality, but an instrument to understand it, a system of abstract relations, a “thought-out table” which must be both abstract and heuristic, and should be used in order to make sense of empirical data and to be confronted with.
- ⁵ It is worth noting that Mons and Dupriez developed this notion of “reflexive accountability” based on the works of Klieme, whose report inspired the policy of “standards” in Germany and in Austria (Klieme et al., 2004, quoted in Mons & Dupriez, 2011) and of the theory of “the mirror effect” developed in France by C. Thélot.
- ⁶ We use here an idea developed by Mons and Dupriez (2011), an idea central to their distinction between “hard” and “reflexive” accountability.
- ⁷ Besides the influence of NPM, the sources of these regulation theories are many, with different inclinations and formal structures, depending on the country and context. Thus, certain actors and networks of experts were able to play a key role in the formulation of these theories. This is the case of the Klieme Report which was the basis for reflection on standards in Germany, Switzerland and Austria (Klieme et al., 2004, quoted in Mons & Dupriez, 2011), of Claude Thélot on the subject of the “mirror effect” in France (Mons, 2009) or even of the role of the inspectorate in the conception of “self-evaluation” in the Scottish case (Ozga & Grek, 2012).
- ⁸ Nonetheless, this conception of a utilitarian actor does not exclude all reflexivity on the part of the actor when, for example, calculating costs and benefits.
- ⁹ The ministry assumes the right to intervene and take authoritative steps if school boards’ improvements are deemed insufficient or their improvement plans inadequate. Moreover, with respect to establishments, the means of exerting pressure (changes or sanctions applied to the

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management of establishments) and of support (the intervention of pedagogical counsellors within the establishments) are at the discretion of school boards, within the framework of legal measures and collective agreements.

¹⁰ It aims to position the school within the “local community” and to encourage “participation” and the “partnership” of parents and local actors. (Please see Maroy, Mathou, Vaillancourt & Voisin, 2013).

¹¹ This hypothesis is based on an ongoing comparative research project (NewAGE; see www.crcpe.umontreal.ca) conducted by Maroy and the team of CRCPE.

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