



GLOBED Erasmus + Joint Master Degree Dissertation

**School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) policies in Brazil:
The role of School Leadership in Mediating Educational Reforms**

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July, 2018



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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List of Abbreviations

ADI – Avaliação Desempenho Individual
CBC – Currículo Básico Comum
CAED - Centro de Políticas Públicas e Avaliação da Educação
LDB - Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional
MEC - Ministério da Educação
MG – Minas Gerais
IDEB – Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica
INEP – Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais
INSE – Indicador de Nível Socioeconômico
PB – Prova Brasil
PIP – Plano Intervenção Pedagógica
PPP – Projeto Político Pedagógico
SAWA – School Autonomy with Accountability
SMEd - Secretaria Municipal da Educação
SEE – Secretaria Estadual de Educação
SIMAVE - SISTEMA MINEIRO DE AVALIAÇÃO E EQUIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO PÚBLICA

Acknowledgements

A very special thanks to all the principals, vice-principals, pedagogical coordinators and teachers of the schools of Belo Horizonte, for giving me the possibility and taking the time to participate in this research, and rendering my research fieldwork also a place to call home;

To the GESTRADO/UFMG group for the support and warmth provided;

To all the REFORMED/UAB group, for the professional and personal engagement. A special thanks to Andreu and Anto, for the teachings and suggestions, and for being good friends other than great colleagues;

A great thanks to Toni, for having provided a sense of belonging, inspired, supported and guided me all throughout;

To the GLOBED staff for the amazing work you do;

To my GLOBED companions for having shared all of the journey with me and enriched it with color, strength and joy;

To my housemates and friends in Barcelona and Brasil, for helping me “balancing out”;

And to my dear family, closest friends and Luca for always being part of me.

Abstract

School Autonomy With Accountability policies (SAWA) have been adopted in Brazil during the 1990s through forms of decentralization, school autonomy and the use of large-scale assessments for accountability purposes. In the state of Minas Gerais, the administrative, managerial and high-stake nature of these reforms are acknowledged to have shaped school practices and identities, and to have been received with resistance by teachers. However, studies on the way policy mechanisms and contextual factors shape and mediate these outcomes are limited.

With this thesis I analyze the enactment (Ball et al, 2012) of these policies by analyzing how principals and school leadership mediate accountability regimes, specifically looking at the interdependence between their adopted practices, contextual factors and the effects of these on teacher's reception and implementation. In order to do so, I have adopted an interpretative/constructivist framework to analyze staff's internal discourses, practices and dynamics.

The study has been conducted in four different schools in the city of Belo Horizonte, through semi-structured interviews and participatory observations in school sites, and has been guided by a realist evaluation (cf. Pawson and Tilley, 2004) methodological approach.

The combination of accountability mechanisms with internal and external school factors have resulted in a nuanced and complex scenario, by which 1) school leaders adopt different direct and indirect practices to align to the accountability reform, which are shaped by their understanding, sense-making and pressures perceived, 2) leadership practices and behaviors are framed according to and contingent to the school institutional and professional context in which they are embedded and 3) principals shape and sustain teacher's reception of the reform through indirect mechanisms of change, but their effectiveness is supported/limited by several conditions and individual factors - such as gender, teacher's working conditions and students' socio-economic status.

Key Words: accountability education reforms; test-based accountability; school leadership; mediating role; policy enactment.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background

Since the late 1990s, Brazil has undergone a set of educational reforms, which can be read as part of a “managerial restructuring program” (de Araújo & Pereira, 2012), characterized by accountability principles as well as the decentralization of school administration (Andrade, 2008; Brooke, 2006; Freitas & Ovando, 2015). At the federal level, both Lula and Cardoso administrations have consolidated such reforms by implementing large-scale assessments at national level (i.e. SAEB, Prova Brasil national tests) and publishing school quality index (IDEB), which rank schools according to national tests evaluations. At the state level, there also seems to be an alignment through reforms of *responsabilização*¹, which link teacher’s quality to student’s results in standardized tests through external incentives and financial rewards (i.e. Productivity Award in Minas Gerais, 2000), thus leading to a form of high-stake accountability (Brooke, 2008). These School Autonomy with Accountability reforms - from now on referred to as SAWA² - linked to efficiency, transparency, as well as to neo-managerial and market principles, are widespread in the global reform agenda as a way to increase the education system’s efficiency and quality. Similarly, in Brazil, such reforms are seen as accountability policy solutions to increase educational quality, improve student’s performance and overcome bureaucratic inefficiencies (OECD, 2010; Freitas and Ovando, 2015).

The literature highlights the controversial and contrasting effects of such reforms at the school level, especially in shaping teachers’ work and instruction. In Brazil, accountability policies of such an administrative and managerial nature (see Verger and Parcerisa, 2017) are acknowledged in fact to have shaped both teacher’s practices (de Carvalho et al., 2012) and teachers’ and

¹ Brazilian scholars translate the concept of accountability with the idea of *responsabilização* and *prestação de contas*, referring to idea of school staff giving account for the results of their schools in front of central government and society (see Brooke, 2006; Castro 2009; Brooke, 2007).

² The acronym SAWA is used to refer to the inseparable combination of School autonomy, evaluation and accountability principles of current education reforms, whereby governments are willing to give autonomy and decentralize power to schools at the conditions of a more strict supervision and control of school results. The use of this language and conceptual framing derives from my participation in the *Reformed* European Research Council (ERC) funded project of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), where I have been conducting my master internship during the academic year 2017/2018. See: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/204116_en.html

principals' identity (Alves Garcia et. al, 2005; da Silva and Alves, 2012). In this context, Ball's (2003; 2005) concept of "culture of performativity" seems to be relevant. Indeed, such measures shape new subjects, creating a new sense of professionalism on the school's administration and staff. Furthermore, pressures deriving from standardized testing and strong accountability regimes may also increase teacher's disengagement, dissatisfaction, stress and frustration (Finningan and Gross, 2007) due to the increased workload and lack of support perceived, while also reducing teacher's sense of motivation, efficacy and professionalism (Ball, 2005; Day et al, 2009). Also Brazilian scholars mainly highlight the negative effects that a tighter managerial control has had on teacher professionalization and on teacher's working conditions (Augusto 2012; Olivera and Duarte, 2014), which can be seen as deriving from different mechanisms such as teacher's lack of involvement in decision-making, decrease control over their instruction, and the increased responsibility in front of society (Olivera and Duarte, 2014). Overall, the reforms have in fact faced a strong opposition and resistance of teachers, principals and their labour unions (Freitas & Ovando, 2015; Brooke, 2009; Andrade, 2008). In the state of Minas Gerais, specifically, official evaluations have been adopted as accountability tools for teachers' quality, linking teacher's salary to school performance through monetary incentives. As a result of these bonus payment schemes, authors argue the degradation of teachers' working conditions, job security and the alteration of the content and pedagogy of teaching (Augusto, 2012; Passone, 2014).

1.2 Rationale of the study

In order to understand the implementation and reception of such reforms, teachers' work and teachers' sense of their work should be understood in relation to the organizational and societal context in which the school is embedded. It is in fact important to look into the school dynamics, the relationships and power sharing amongst educational staff, which can act as a mediating factor between the accountability policies and teacher's enactment of them (Spillane et al, 2002). In this sense, if accountability policies have shifted school's internal management and organization, as well as shaped new identities, the principal's role, responsibilities and practices at the school level may be relevant aspects to consider. In terms of principal's role in schools, it is acknowledged that the principal holds a primary role directly on student's learning or in an indirect way through organizational features. More interestingly, in the context of high-stake tests, principals are seen as holding an intermediate position, acting as "managers in the middle" the policy and the school level (Spillane et al, 2002a.). Principals are in fact seen as occupying a unique position, negotiating between external pressures, achievements and demands and the school internal context and resources (Day, 2005; Shaked and Schechter, 2017).

Principals can be in fact held accountable to external agencies, bodies and governments, or to community and parent's expectations; they can be asked to respond to administrative bureaucratic accountability pressures, such as those deriving from policy procedures, regulations, outcomes and standards (Shipps and White, 2009; Pollock and Winston, 2015), or also from a quick changing market context, thus operating in a market accountability regime, characterized by competition dynamics between schools (Leithwood, 2001; Winston and Pollock, 2015). Another dominant regime of accountability under which schools operate is considered to be the so-called

management (Leithwood, 2001; Moller, 2003), managerial (Normore, 2004) or performance-based accountability (Pollock and Winston, 2015) regime, characterized by a hierarchical government system of control, strategic management, principles of efficiency, rational procedures, supervision and assessments. At the same time, a decentralized accountability reform may be also present; one that implies site-based management and decentralization dynamics, with decision-making power posed at the school level (Leithwood, 2001; Normore, 2004).

In addition to these external pressures, principals can experience also internal accountability demands, such as those deriving from professional judgment (i.e professional accountability) or from their moral obligations and sense of duty (i.e moral accountability). In this sense, the distinction between external and internal accountability is an interesting and relevant one to consider. According to Elmore (2005) external accountability refers to “policies that evaluate, reward, and sanction schools on the basis of measured student performance” (Elmore, 2005: 134), while internal accountability implies systems of individual responsibility, internal normative structures and values, that might be relatively immune to external influences. However, the concept of internal accountability also includes school’s internal rules, mechanisms and daily practices, which reflect school’s capacity to respond to external expectations (Carnoy, 2009 in Knapp and Feldman, 2012). In this sense, aligning the performance-based (external) accountability approach to the professional (internal) accountability might represent a favorable approach for meaningful school reform and change (Elmore, 2005).

The conflicted or aligned accountability pressures (see Shipps and White, 2009; Winston and Pollock, 2015) that the principal perceives can lead to a negotiation between ethical, moral values and external demands (Day, 2005), between maintaining/achieving an integrity of the school’s vision and the legitimacy of standardized results (Spillane et al., 2012) responding to policy pressures and at the same time maintaining good quality relationships with its staff. In this line, the sense-making (Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2016) or interpretation (Ball, 2012) that the principal has about the reform, as well as the available resources in order to achieve it’s set goals (Spillane et al., 2001), can be crucial to understand how principals implement the reform in terms of decision making processes and leadership practices.

In addition, from a behavioral perspective, the practices that leaders adopt may shape teacher’s job satisfaction and sense of professionalism, by sustaining or reducing their self-efficacy, motivation, enthusiasm and commitment (e.g Leithwood et al., 2006; Yu et al., 2002). The broad literature on principal’s leadership styles in schools has recently focused on the effectiveness of instructional, transformational and distributed leadership strategies. The first is conceptualized by Hallinger (2003) and is related to the direct involvement of principals in defining the school goals and instructional strategies. It is also associated with top-down strategies, directive behaviors, and use of external rewards to stimulate the achievement of results (Hallinger, 2005). On the other hand, transformative styles of leadership in educational contexts (conceptualized by Leithwood, 1994) are associated with the creation of a shared vision, attention to teacher’s needs and the creation of a culture for change. The literature highlights the positive effects of creating such culture of collegiality and shared vision, such as increased staff involvement and organizational learning

(Kurland et al, 2010), teacher's capacity, emotions and commitment to change (Leithwood et al., 2002; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; Yu et al, 2002). Other authors point out to the contribution of collegial trust and quality relationships amongst staff as a way to enhance teacher's sense of belonging, and self-efficacy in carrying out his/her work (see Van Houtte and Van Maele, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2009) or to the share of power and participatory involvement in decision-makings, in a form of distributed (Spillane et. al, 2004), collaborative (Hallinger and Heck, 2010) or democratic type of leadership (Harris and Chapman, 2002).

Leadership, decentralization and management in Brazil

In the context of Brazil, the increased autonomy and decentralization of schools since the 1990s has led to principal assuming a role in leading both the managerial and pedagogical dimensions of the school (Honorato n.d; da Silva & Alves, 2012). However, although an effective autonomy and decentralization of school management requires participation, collective decision-making and collegial spirit (Betinati and Pires, n.d), in Brazil these reforms are promoting a "vertical managerialism" as opposed to a horizontal and democratic one (de Carvalho et al, 2012; Da Silva and Santos, 2016). In fact, in Brazil, a neo-liberal and market ideology that promotes rational, technical and instrumental logic prevails in the school administration (Santos e Da Silva, 2012). In other words, in Brazil, the paradigm of a democratic school management takes a second place to the managerial one (Da Silva and Santos, 2016).

Therefore, if one cause for teacher's reduced sense of professionalism in Brazil is seen as the verticality and linear interventions of government measures, as well as the use of monetary external incentives, it is relevant to understand if effective leadership practices can contribute to how teachers are involved in reform changes – thus mitigate teacher's negative reception of SAWA reforms. It is nonetheless important to acknowledge that both distributed and transformational practices of leaderships require additional time as well as more human, social, cultural resources to be effectively carried out (Spillane et al., 2001). It is thus necessary to analyze both the school internal and external contextual factors under which principals may be able to adopt certain behaviors and practices, in a realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 2004) analysis that helps understand how mechanisms are activated under particular circumstances.

1.3 Research aim, relevance and structure of the thesis

The aim of the thesis is therefore to identify under which conditions and in which sense can principal's leadership mediate the enactment of school autonomy and accountability (SAWA) policies in Brazil.

In the literature regarding accountability reforms in Brazil, there seems to be a lack of research on the effects of high-stake tests and managerial accountability policies on principal's leadership and on the role of principals in mediating the effects of accountability reforms in schools. Also, the literature regarding principal's leadership in schools mainly focuses on the effectiveness of leadership styles, without analyzing the conditions and motivations for which those strategies are being adopted. Modern leadership styles are also categorized in ways that moral and ethical values are left outside. Therefore, through my research, I would be willing to understand how principals

mediate the implementation of SAWA policies in Brazil, in a framework, which takes into account their subjective understanding, perception and interpretation of the policy reform.

In this sense, it is particularly relevant to present and frame the study of leadership in a “multiple” accountability framework (Shipps and White, 2009), and to unpack the concept of accountability, acknowledging to *whom* and *how* principals are held accountable, understanding how the accountability mechanisms operate, and the consequences that these accountabilities may generate on principal’s decision making and practices. In fact, accountability systems may differ according to how they respond to these questions (Day, 2002). Similarly, Normore (2004), argues that educational accountability experienced by school leaders differs from the concept of accountability framed in policy discourse, which generally refers to school, teacher or student accountability, and that we therefore should consider an “alternative approach to accountability” experienced by school administrators.

In the same way as we consider a multiple framework for accountability, we should also take into account a “multiple” leadership conceptualization. This is because, as will be deepened further on, school leader’s expected roles and adopted practices are contingent to the accountability policy contexts. Also, it is also important to underline the fact that leadership is one of the most extensively studied and therefore differently defined concepts. In the Organizational Behavior studies (e.g Luthans, 2010), traditional theories have associated leadership with personal characteristics a person is born with, emphasizing the fact that “leaders are born, not made”; modern theorizations of leadership have on the contrary focused on the process of leadership and change, describing leadership as the activity of influencing, motivating and inspiring people towards the achievement of certain goals. In this sense, leadership involves both components of interactions with a group of people and the presence of desired goals to achieve. Leadership may be also composed of personal attitudes, morals and values: studies on leadership have pointed to the importance of leaders displaying qualities such as empathy, concern for others, or ethical principles such as equality and fairness (see Brown and Trevino, 2005 in Luthans, 2010). In this sense, I will not consider leadership as a stand-alone concept or leadership style, but as a combination of values, norms, goals and interpersonal interactions, which ultimately shape leadership practices.

Furthermore, including the role of principal’s negotiation amongst internal and external demands in taking certain decisions, and the role of this decision making in shaping their practices, could also help overcome research gaps and contribute to “unpacking” the implementation of such reforms. In this way, by adopting a contingent/policy-based (Shipps and White, 2009; Spillane et al, 2002b) explanation of principal’s positional power and construction of accountability environments, I would be therefore looking closer into the way principals perceive and respond to accountability pressures as well as their role in shaping teacher’s reception and implementation of such reforms. In this sense, building on Ball’s (2012) *theory of enactment* and Spillane and colleagues’ (2002b) *policy cognitive* framework, policies are not considered in their linear processes, but are mediated by actor’s interpretation and translation of the policy reform.

The analytical framework will be thus focusing on how principals make sense of the accountability policy, their adopted practices and underlining decision-making processes, and the ultimate effect of these practices in shaping teacher’s reception of the accountability reform.

The thesis will be structured as follows:

The next chapter will present background elements on the context in which these specific reforms have been developed and implemented; this includes Brazilian education system and governance and the policy trajectory and key characteristics of what is considered to be the SAWA system³, in both Brazil and Minas Gerais, highlighting their legislative framework, objectives, rationale, as well as mechanisms and controversies.

The third chapter will focus on a comprehensive review of the literature on the role of principals/school leadership under school accountability regimes – both in the international literature, both in the case of Brazil; I will hereby discuss principal's roles, tasks and responsibilities; the alignment/negotiation between internal and external accountability pressures; and principal's adopted of leadership practices and their generated outcomes.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology and research design adopted; this will include the methodological approach and research instruments used, the school selection and sampling strategy, describing the data collection processes and data analysis procedure, ethical considerations, and limitations.

Analysis and findings will be further discussed in the fifth chapter; these will be presented thematically, following the structure of the analytical/conceptual framework.

The last and sixth chapter will finally present the main conclusions of the research, policy implications/recommendations as well as potential future lines of research.

³ I will refer to the Brazilian/Minas Gerais SAWA system as the conjunction of those educational instruments, policies and reforms, which are based on the use of external standardized large-scale assessments for accountability purposes.

Chapter 2 – Context of the research

2.1 The Brazilian context and education system

2.1.1 Brief historical background and characteristics

Brazil has come a long way from a slaved-based agricultural system to a democratic system and this trajectory also largely reflects in the evolution of its education system. Before the establishment of a democratic system, poor attention was posed on education since there was no need of educated population (OECD, 2010), and educational attendance was considerably low (UNESCO, 2015). With the establishment of the 1988 Constitution, a democratic institutional structure ensured the right to a free and mandatory right to education; and decentralization and resource investments were also highly increased.

Further, during the 1990s, with the emergence of globalization and global competitiveness, the country had to focus not only on quantity and expanding educational access, but also on quality problems, which were still largely affecting the country (OECD, 2010). Issues of poverty, poor quality teaching, dropout rates and low parents demands became the major issues to be addressed (OECD, 2010). Under F. H. Cardoso's (PSDB) presidency (1994 - 2003) social reforms were addressed and major legislations approved based on the so-called "*managerial revolution*" (P. G. de Araújo & Pereira, 2012)⁴. An example is the *Law of Directives and Foundations of National Education* – LDB (Law 9,394/96), which established a framework of institutional responsibilities and legislative directives (OECD, 2010, UNESCO, 2015).

In addition, in terms of pedagogical model, it is acknowledged that the democratization process brought to the emergence of a plurality of pedagogical experiences (Sartorio, n.d). Specifically, during the end of the 1990s, a new educational model emerged (known as "Escola Nova"), inspired by John Dewey and based on the principles of constructivism (known as "princípios norteadores"), which include a competence-based pedagogy, the relation between education and learning and the figure of a "reflexive professor" (Sartorio, n.d), thus highlighting the role of teacher's subjectivity and agency and the student's individual process of learning. In parallel, in Minas Gerais (Belo

⁴ This is a managerial reform that emerged as a response of the mid 1990s Brazilian financial crisis and that included the reduction of public expenses, the adjustment of fiscal policies, the privatization of public assets. It was also intended to reform the administration, considered excessively bureaucratic and inflexible, towards a more managerial paradigm, inspired in the principles of the private sector; thus, focusing on results and outputs and on a more decentralized administration (De Araújo and Pereira, 2012).

Horizonte, specifically), we can see the relevance of the project of the “Escola Plural” which was based on a social and human more than capitalist logic; the project aimed to render education more “plural”, focusing on the experience of each student in its social and human nature/process. The project was considered an innovative project based on two major changes, amongst which a “new evaluation logic” (Fonseca and Talim, n.d). Indeed, in its proposition and ideology, the Escola Plural aimed at evaluations being continuous, diagnostic, dynamic and investigative, in order to “assess education and students as a whole, to focus on the link between learning and assessments, teacher intervention, the organization of school’s pedagogical plan” (Fonseca and Talim, n.d: 2).

The first decade of the 2000s (governed by Lula Da Silvia – Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), was further characterized by the implementation of funding mechanisms and the expansion of mandatory schooling from 7-14 to 4-17 years (Constitutional Amendment 59/2009). After the Jomtien conference (specifically, 2000-2013 period), progress had been therefore achieved in the education sector, which reflects in the improvement of educational indicators with regards to access, dropouts and educational performance (UNESCO, 2015).

In this context, the country’s participation in international large-scale assessments (i.e. PISA, 2000) has been crucial to revile the poor education quality of Brazilian’s education system – such as problems of infrastructure, number of teachers and absences of full day schools (OECD, 2010). In fact, during these years there has been the establishment of *the National Curricular Standards (PCN)*, the creation of *a nationwide Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB)*, as well as improvements in teacher training. The goal thus became increasing the quality of education and ensuring, through measurable outcomes, that “quality indicators of excellence” were achieved (UNESCO, 2015); In addition, this “search for excellence” triggered the country’s implementation and expansion of evaluation systems (such as SAEB evaluation system), performance indicators (such as IDEB) and output measures, useful to monitor the performance of schools, teachers and students (UNESCO, 2015).

However, the poor quality of the education system still remained a major issue for the country (OECD, 2010), as well as the persistence of equity, social and geographical disparities. Indeed, “in a highly decentralized education system and with about one-quarter of its population below the age of 15, Brazil needs to continue efforts to tackle the disparities between regions and institutions in terms of access, quality and funding of education” (OECD, 2015: 4). Brazil is in fact considered to be one of the most unequal countries, both socially both geographically, with its Northern-Southern and rural-urban divide accounting for the majority of the differences in economical, social and human aspects (UNESCO, 2015; INEP, 2017).

2.1.2 Education structure and organization: its complex federal governance

Structure of the education system

According to the LDB legislative framework (art 21, Lei nº 9.394/96), the Brazilian education is structured in two different levels: Basic education (composed of childhood, primary and secondary education) and Higher education (see annex 1). Although considered as part of one whole

educational level, primary education is further structured in two different steps: Elementary Education (1-5 years) and Lower secondary Education (6-9years)

Educational governance

In terms of educational governance, Brasil is a specially decentralized country where the different administrative units (federal, states and municipalities) have a key role in providing education and advancing educational reforms⁵, especially in the basic education level (OECD, 2015). This comes with the 1996 LDB legislation, that has increased the flexibility and autonomy of the education system and its respective units (OEI, n.d.). The legal framework (art /96) has in fact officially defined the responsibilities and roles of the municipality, states and federal system:

- Municipalities (through respective educational bodies and secretary, *Secretaria Municipal da Educação* - SMEd) are responsible for early childhood education (age 0-5) as well as primary education (ages 6-14) (art. 2);
- States (through the *Secretaria da Estado da Educação* – SEE, and its regional administrations *Superintendências Regionais de Ensino* - SREs) share the responsibility of primary education with municipalities, and are also responsible for administering and managing secondary and vocational educations (age 14-17);
- The federal government (Ministry of Education, *Ministério da Educação* – MEC and its respective secretaries) oversees the entire education system and has responsibility of the entire higher education system.

Local level autonomy

Overall, in terms of school autonomy index, Brasil has a lower degree of school autonomy (49,5) when compared to the OECD average (71,3), and in both managerial and pedagogical aspects (cf. OECD, 2015). However, the fact that each unit has responsibility over a different level of education also means that the local levels (states and municipalities) hold autonomy in administering and managing issues both in terms of curriculum and in financing (OECD, 2010; OECD, 2015).

1) Pedagogical Autonomy

The schools' pedagogical and curricular autonomy is determined at federal-national level, through the 2010 resolution (CNE/CEB, Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais Gerais para a Educação Básica). The union recommends curriculum parameters (Parametros Curriculares Nacionais – PCN); however, specifications on what students should know and how to achieve it, is left to states and municipalities. In addition, curriculum parameters do not establish the compulsory content to be covered, but a synthesis of thematic areas/perspectives, competencies and basic skills that teachers and schools can choose to revise and/or focus on. In fact, the legal framework states that the specific formative actions should be open and adapted to the specific local contexts (LDB, 1996, art. 26; CNE/CEB, 2010, art. 13).

⁵ In Brazil more than 5000 school systems autonomously manage their schools, with the majority of schools (114,7mil, representing 61,7 % of the total schools in the country), under the responsibility of municipalities (INEP, 2017).

In addition, schools are responsible for adapting the most suitable teaching methods and the arrangements of the delivery of such content (UNESCO, 2010). This means that schools hold institutional autonomy in drafting their own pedagogical development plan: this autonomy is placed within the so-called *projeto político-pedagógico* (PPP). Teachers follow the national guidelines, in terms of objectives in abilities and standards to be achieved, but do not have mandatory content to be covered (SEE/Proposta curricular CBC). Therefore, in practice, schools hold a wide degree of autonomy for adapting school plans, including subjects, curriculum, and to choose the pedagogical approach that best suits their needs and capacities.

2) Managerial Autonomy

In terms of school financing autonomy, although the union has a redistributive financial role, financing is independent to each unit (OECD, 2015). States and municipalities are in fact responsible for funding primary and secondary education and for managing resources in terms of both personnel and finances; this includes construction of schools, equipment provision, school lunches, transport, teacher training and recruiting and paying their salaries (OECD, 2010). In addition, in the end of the '90s, a larger financial autonomy has been attributed to schools through the decentralization of funds, such as the *Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola* – PDDE, according to which national funds are transferred to schools through a private banking account (BRASIL, 1995)⁶. With this, schools can provide necessary materials, school resources and support teacher training courses (Resolução n° 03 de 1997). Therefore, schools in Brazil have been attributed, especially since 1996, a considerable financial and managerial autonomy, although comparatively to other countries, this is considered to be low (cf. OECD, 2015).

2.1.3 School organization and professional teaching status: a de-professionalized profession

Schools years in Brazil starts in February and ends in December, with interruption during July and December. This offer is generally divided in three different shifts: morning (7-11), afternoon (13-17) and evening (18h-22h).

The pedagogical strategy of the school is under responsibility of the school collegiality (*colegiado escolar*), which is composed of the administration staff, teachers, leadership team, and under the responsibility of the entire school community (hence including also parents and students).

The leadership team is composed of the school principal, vice principal, as well as school pedagogical specialists/coordinators (cf. annex 3). The leadership team is responsible, amongst others, for the definition and implementation of the defined school's pedagogical strategy, to ensure the achievement of educational targets, and to represent the school in front of the school

⁶ The *Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola* – PDDE consists in the transference through the *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* – FNDE, of financial resources to public schools of elementary education of state, federal and municipal schools, destined to supporting maintenance and investments costs, and aimed at contributing to the fiscal and pedagogical improvement of schools (translated from Art. 1°). Funds are transferred into a private banking account - *Conta bancária da Unidade Executora* (Uex) - a private entity bank that represents the school unit, and which is responsible for receiving and executing financial resources received by the FNDE (BRASIL, 1997).

community. In terms of number of staff in each school, this is based on the number of pupils enrolled; this means that, since enrollments differ according to administrative dependencies and educational levels (INEP, 2017)⁷, school size and school staff will vary accordingly.

Teachers in public schools may be contracted under three different contract statuses, namely: *efetivo* (entry by public tender), *efetivado* and *contratado* (hired temporarily). The difference between them is that *efetivos* have a guaranteed vacancy in state public schools, while *efetivados* and *contratados* are not part of career plans and do not have constitutional stability (Augusto, 2013). According to the study made from GESTRADO/UFMG research group (see Olivera and Duarte, 2012), with 68% of teachers in Brasil holding *contratos efetivos*, Brasil is the country with the fewer stable contracts in its educational levels. This situation of different contract laboring conditions has led to a “standardized working condition”, characterized by job flexibility and part-time work (Olivera and Duarte, 2012). Indeed, in Brazil, teachers working in the public sector are not considered to be state public servants, therefore their profession it is not considered a “full time dedicated” job (de “*dedicação exclusiva*”) (Olivera e Duarte, 2012). This means that teachers in Brazil can and often are contracted under different contracts, they work in more than one school of different administrative dependencies, and often in more than one shift in the same school (Alves e Silva, 2009).

This also links to the issue of low salaries: according to the OECD (2017), teachers in Brazil receive a statutory salary, which is well below the OECD average⁸, as well as below other Latin American countries. Also compared to other professions, the salary of teachers in Brasil is lower than those of all the other professions with the same levels of instruction (Duarte e Olivera, 2014). The same situation applies in the case of Minas Gerais, where, according to research conducted by the UFMG/GESTRADO research group (in Olivera e Duarte, 2012), more than half of Minas Gerais’ teachers have a monthly remuneration, which is below minimum wages.

In order to reach a minimum salary level, teachers in Brazil work in more than one school, and are considered to be the only public sector job where this is happening (Olivera e Duarte, 2012). In fact, Brasil is also the country where teachers spend the most hours teaching per week (25 hours, that is 6 more than TALIS average) (TALIS, 2013). Also in the case of Minas Gerais, more than 40% of teachers work in more than one educational unit, and 23,4% have a weekly work above 25 hours of work (Olivera and Duarte, 2012). Low salary is thus one of the main components of the de-professionalization and precariousness of teacher’s job, which highlights the unattractiveness of this profession (OECD, 2010).

In addition, teachers work in large classes: according to the OECD (2017), although class sizes have decreased from 2005 to 2015, they are still large on average (23 pupils per class in primary and 27 in lower secondary compared to OECD average of 21 and 23 respectively).

⁷ In Brasil, of the students enrolled in Basic Education, 46,8% are enrolled in municipal schools and 34% in state schools. At primary school level (i.e ensino Fundamental anos iniciais), 82,9% of total public school enrolled students are in municipal schools; while at lower secondary school level (i.e ensino Fundamental Anos Finais), 5,3 million (43,1%) of students are enrolled in state schools and 5,1 millions (41,9%) in municipal schools (INEP, 2017).

⁸ In Brasil, a teacher’s statutory starting salary, based on minimum qualifications, is USD 13 000 for primary to upper secondary education, while the OECD averages for these levels which are all above USD 30 000 (OECD, 2017).

Teacher training is also considered to be low quality (OECD, 2010). In fact, although LDB legislation raised requirements to become a teacher, as well as rendered the pre-service and in-service teacher training free (UNESCO, 2015), the quality of in-service training, still remains a major concern (TALIS, 2013). In parallel, for what regards the professional advancement career in Minas Gerais (legislated through lei. 15.293/2004), less than 50% of teachers have professional development plans (Olivera and Duarte, 2012). Therefore, authors consider that the process of democratization that came with the 1988 legislation, led to a “massification” of the teaching profession, without however being adequately accompanied by mechanisms that could guarantee the quality and efficiency of the training and courses offered (de Castro, 2009).

2.2 The Brazilian SAWA System: reform trajectories and characteristics

2.2.1 Emergence and centrality of large-scale evaluations as accountability tools

During the 2000, the notion of “measurement” of educational quality emerged in the international community, and in this context, large-scale assessments became popular means to triggering educational change and improving educational quality indicators. In the same line, large-scale evaluation systems were also implemented in Brazil, and their centrality largely increased during the 1990s, when they became integrated in governmental policies to monitor educational quality through institutional results, as well as in school practices (Bonamino and Souza, 2012; UNESCO, 2015). Indeed, since the last 15 years, Brazil is considered to have become a pioneer in the field of large-scale assessments (Brooke, 2008), implementing what is considered to be a “effective policy of educational evaluation” (Castro et al, 2009), composed of different programs, sophisticated designed external testing items and instruments, which have been used both to manage educational systems (Brooke, 2007), enabling the monitoring and formulation of public policies, and also as main tools for accountability purposes (Castro et al, 2009; Brooke, 2008).

At the federal level, the Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB), designed in 1988 by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP), has the objective to monitor the quality, efficiency and equity of primary and secondary schools and to promote the universalization of educational access (UNESCO, 2015; consultoria legislativa, 2015: 5). Since first implemented in 1990, the test has been carried out every two years, on a sample basis, assessing Portuguese language and mathematics, in 4th and 8th grades of primary education (Ensino Fundamental - ISCED 1) and in 3rd grade of middle school (ISCED 3) of both private and public schools, located in both rural and urban areas. In terms of its design, it is relevant to mention that items of SAEB test are elaborated on the basis of the competences and abilities required in the end of educational cycles, which are defined in curricular matrixes (Matrix de Referência Curricular) and inspired by the directives defined in the National Curricular Parameters (PCNs). These are further translated in “common proficiency scales”, interpreted on the basis of what students know, understand and are able to do. In addition to subject-based evaluations on Portuguese language and mathematics, SAEB also captures contextual factors, such as socioeconomic, cultural and habitus factors of

students and schools, through contextual questionnaires. In terms of its results, its configuration has provided with the possibility of comparing school results according to different disciplines and educational cycles (Bonamino and Souza, 2012; Castro et al, 2009). Also, SAEB is seen to have had major effects on educational policy, by showing the effects of repetition and age-series distortion, and leading states and municipalities to adopt a series of programs in order to accelerate learning and decrease repetition rates (Castro et al, 2009).

However, in its first configuration, SAEB enabled to compare the difference in quality between schools of different administrative dependencies, but did not measure students' performance over time; this has led to the restructuring and expansion of the evaluation system in 2005 (Portaria 931, 2005), where SAEB became composed of three different evaluations, two of which implemented on a census-basis:

1. Avaliação Nacional de Educação Básica (ANEB) - with which SAEB became referred to – that evaluates of students in 4th, 8th grades of primary education, in public and private schools on a sample basis;
2. Avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar (Anresc), better known as “**Prova Brasil**”, a census basis evaluation of students attending basic (4th and 8th grade) and middle school (3rd grade) public schools.
3. The Avaliação Nacional da Alfabetização (ANA), evaluating on a census-basis 3rd grade elementary pupils (ISCED 1) of public schools, with the objective of assessing the levels of alphabetization and literacy in Portuguese language, mathematics and the conditions of levels of supply of schools alphabetization cycles (portal.inep).

According to Bonamino and Souza (2012), the fact that SAEB was a sample test meant that it had low interference on schools and curriculum; in addition, the system shows data aggregately, which does lead to the introduction of accountability policies for teachers or principals the improvement of schools' quality (Bonamino and Souza, 2012). On the contrary, the implementation and dissemination of Prova Brasil results on a census basis has provided with the possibility of complementing SAEB's data, thus capturing state and municipality's specificities, comparing school data longitudinally, and also adding consequences on schools and staff (Bonamino and Souza, 2012; Castro et al, 2009).

Another important characteristics of Prova Brasil is the dissemination and divulgation of results through *pedagogical bulletins* to all schools of states and municipalities; this has enabled schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the performance of its municipality, state or the entire country (De Castro, 2009). However, the effective use of the results has also encountered limits and difficulties in achieving mainly due to the lack of institutional capacity of schools (De Castro, 2009).

In 2007, the results of both Prova Brasil and SAEB were further aggregated in the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (**IDEB**), an indicator created by the Ministry of Education that synthesizes what are considered to be two important elements of educational quality:

academic performance and well as educational flux⁹. The aim of the test was to create “synthetic results, easily assailable, that would permit to trace educational quality targets for the system” (inep.gov.br). In fact, the combination of the two elements result in an synthetized index which goes from 0 to 10, used to set educational targets. These are differentiated according to the administrative dependency of schools, to the municipality and also according to the different education cycles, as can be seen in the table here below.

Table 1 IDEB results and targets for the state of Minas Gerais

Level of Basic Education	IDEB Observed		Projected Targets						
	2009	2011	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Elementary Education	5.5	5.8	4.9	5.3	5.6	5.9	6.1	6.4	6.6
Lower Secondary Education	4.1	4.4	3.7	4.0	4.4	4.8	5.0	5.3	5.6

Source: own elaboration based on INEP: <http://ideb.inep.gov.br/resultado/>

These educational targets are also internationally comparable: indeed, using 2005 as a baseline, the goal of the index is for Brazil to reach performance target of 6, which corresponds to the average score on PISA in 2021 (UNESCO, 2015).

In terms of its use, the pedagogical focus of the index enabled municipalities to use it to legitimize pedagogical interventions in under-performing schools (Freitas & Ovando, 2015). In fact, results are disaggregated by municipalities, and it is possible to see in which of the aspects evaluated schools have improved more. On the other hand, for its synthetic characterization, state and federal administration have used it to establish targets and national benchmarks for improvement (Benamino and Souza, 2012; UNESCO, 2015). This is considered to respond to diagnostic purposes, by supporting the resource management and decision of the government, and enabling a policy dialogue and collaboration on pedagogical actions between the federal, state and municipal system (Benamino and Souza, 2012).

The relevance of IDEB is also attributable to the fact that the results of the index generate rankings, which are publicly available and also published in the media (Andrade, 2008; OECD, 2010, 2015). This public dissemination of results promotes the mobilization of school staff but also the pressure from parents and community, claiming for a higher improvement of quality of education for their children (Benamino and Souza, 2012). For these reasons, the design and implementation of the index is considered to be a major step towards education accountability (OECD, 2010); however, since no economic incentives are attached to the results for schools or teachers, it is also considered a policy with *low-stake* consequences (Andrade, 2008).

Overall, it is considered that large-scale evaluations have become central in the educational policy of the country: “large-scale evaluations began orienting education policy in the federated entities particularly in the past decade, during which they were incorporated into school routines. Though it

⁹ The indicator is calculated from school flow data obtained from the school census and from average performance of SAEB and Prova Brasil’s examinations (see inep.gov.br)

is not yet possible to affirm that the dissemination of school evaluation systems has been homogenous in all states and municipalities, their importance to modern education policy in Brazil is unquestionable” (UNESCO, 2015 p.76).

2.2.2 The Minas Gerais accountability system and reform moments: a bureaucratic, outcome and curricular - based accountability

At the national level, a wide number of own large-scale evaluations have been further implemented in a various states, gradually spreading in eighteen states from 1992 to 2001 (UNESCO, 2015). The characteristics of SAEB as a sample test did not satisfy the purpose of state policy evaluations; In fact, SAEB stimulated states to create their own national evaluation systems and publicize the results, in order to assess and compare all schools of their state or municipalities (Hypolito et al, 2012; Bonamino and Souza, 2012).

Minas Gerais is considered to be the first state to adopt state wide external education assessments (Brooke, 2008). The national evaluation examination system - the *Minas Gerais System for the Evaluation of Public Education* (SIMAVE) - was in fact adopted since the year 1991. However, it is considered to have brought its major impacts since its regulamentation in 2000, when its results have been used in the context of the so-called “*choque de gestao*” (managerial shock)¹⁰ (Augusto, 2012), under a center-right (PSDB) government. Amongst other objectives, the test aimed at “developing management processes based on a continuous evaluation of public education policies” [...] (MINAS GERAIS, 2000). In addition, the need of implementing a standardize test at national level has also emerged from the lack of longitudinal analysis provided by Prova Brasil (interview with key informant, CAED/UFJF¹¹). In fact, in terms of design, SIMAVE evaluates years, which were not tested in Prova Brasil, therefore enabling to generate a continuous diagnosis of the primary and lower secondary education levels.

The test is composed of three different external evaluations, designed in collaboration with CAEDE (UFJF) institute¹²:

1. *Programa de Avaliação da Educação Básica (PROEB)*, which annually evaluates public school students in the last years of basic education levels (5th and 9th years of Basic

¹⁰ This is an administrative state reform under the center-right government of A. Neves and Anastasia (PSDB), and characterized by a public managerial administration, based on the state control of results and educational performance. The reform aimed at modernizing the system and restructuring state apparatus with the assumption that this organizational and managerial transformation would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the system and the levels of productivity (Augusto, 2012).

¹¹ Interviews conducted at the policy level, in the context of Reformed project (October – December, 2017) are used to support the contextual reasons and motivations for the adoption of the test-based accountability.

¹² *Centro de Políticas Pública e Avaliação da Educação* (CAED) is a research institute of the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), responsible for the general coordination of SIMAVE in all Minas Gerais State; this the elaboration of test items, the distribution of results, the planning, supervision and accompanying state and regional administration in the implementation of the programs, the analysis as well as the divulgation of its results, and for the related activities of pedagogical support and continuous formation to schools.

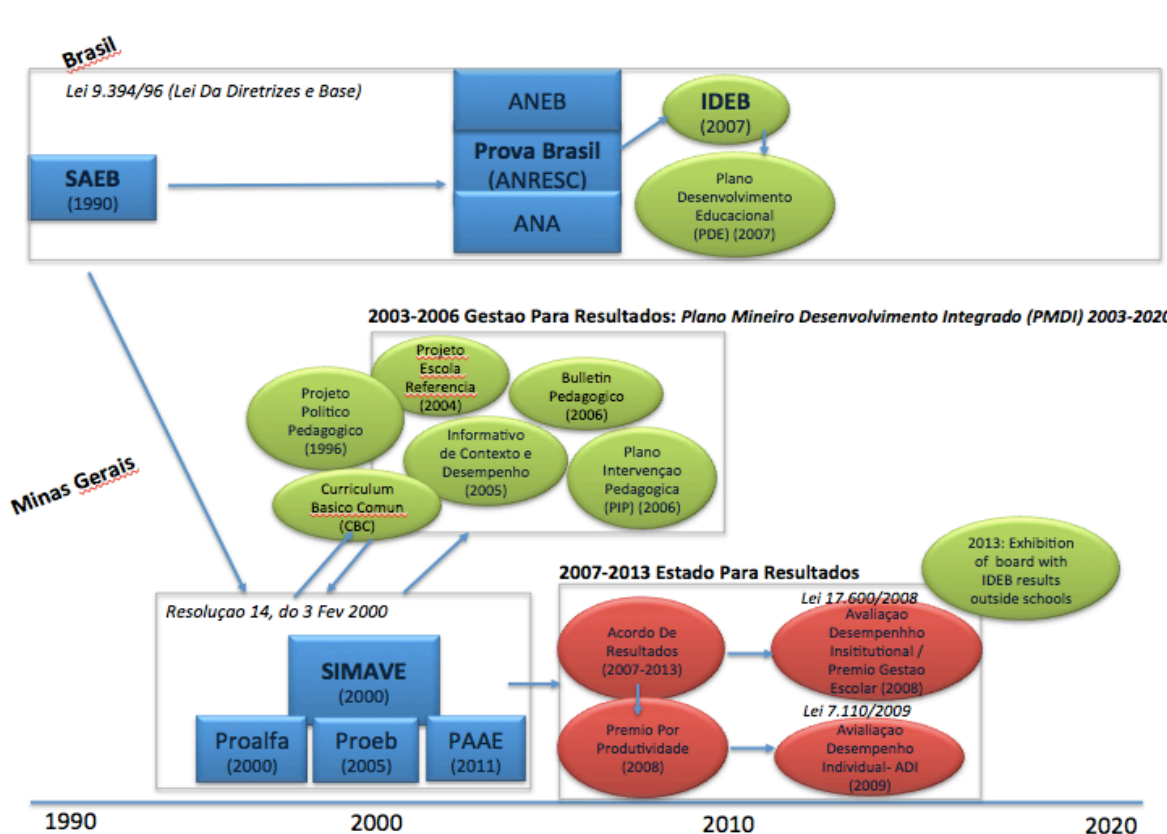
Education and 3rd year of Middle school) and in abilities and competencies in Portuguese language and mathematics.

2. *Programa de Avaliação da Alfabetização (Proalfa)*, that aims to evaluate the alphabetization levels of students in 2nd and 4th years and (sample) and 3rd year (census) of basic education.
3. *Programa de Avaliação da Aprendizagem Escolar (PAAE)*, an online system of evaluations which provide schools with incentives and feedbacks to improve; it evaluates students twice a year (beginning and end of school year) in final years of basic education and middle school education;

The test is conducted in all public schools at municipal, state and federal levels, in both rural and urban areas. Questionnaires are also administered to students, in order to capture the socio-economic profile of students, as well as to teachers and school leadership team in order to obtain contextual school information. As in the case of SAEB, the items of the tests are based on the competencies evaluated in each of the test's areas; these are defined on the basis of the curricular matrix used in SAEB, with the objective of comparing the results of the two tests (UFJF/SIMAVE, 2000/2001). Results are divulged based on proficiency indicators (recommended, intermediate and low levels) (MINAS GERAIS, 2001); therefore results, publically available, situate schools in relation to their municipalities, but do not generate rankings (Brooke, 2006). Officially in fact, results are used to produce information on the quality of Minas Gerais education system as a whole, and to identify inequalities and educational opportunities in order to promote the democratization and quality of the public school system (see MINAS GERAIS, 2001).

However, as can be seen in the chart below, a large number of educational policies were also attached to the results of SIMAVE evaluations. These have created what can be considered a "system of accountability policies", referred to as a conjunction of educational policies and reforms that involve the evaluation, control and responsibility of schools and staff (Duarte et al., 2012).

Figure 1: Reform trajectory and test-based accountability policies in Brazil and Minas Gerais



Source: own elaboration¹³

Within the trajectory of these test-based accountability policies, the use of the test results has changed during what can be distinguished in three different period-time.

1) In the first stage (2003-2006 period), the results of the evaluations were mainly used for diagnostic and evaluative purposes (Augusto, 2012). In fact, test results were linked to what are generally considered to be *low-stake accountability* policies, with reputational and symbolic consequences (Brooke et al, 2006).

An example is the use of the **Bolletim da Avaliaçao** (Evaluation Bulletin) and the divulgation of **Bolletim Pedagógico** (School Pedagogical Bulletin) at the school level. Adopted since the year 2006, these consisted in a card with the distribution of school results on SIMAVE evaluations, as well as providing the average performance level of its students, in comparisons to schools with similar socio-economic status: the aim was to give schools an overview of their own results as well as an opportunity to compare themselves with other schools with similar characteristics. With the Pedagogical Bulletin, schools also received detailed analysis of the area of knowledge evaluated, together with suggestions on school actions, such as reviewing school plans and establishing parameters for comparisons over time (SMED, 2006; MINAS GERAIS, 2001). The fact that equity indicators were included rendered this aspect a component of its accountability policy (Brooke, 2008). It is also considered that this policy has been received with interest and engagement, which

¹³ In blue: standardized external tests; In green: low-stake accountability policies and programs attached to test results; in red; High-stake accountability policies and programs attached to test results.

may be attributed to the absence of any explicit consequences for below average performance (Brooke, 2008).

In addition, the feedbacks received were expected to be incorporated in school pedagogical and instructional plans: in fact, two major objectives of the external evaluations are the elaboration of an intervention plan (Plano de Intervenção Pedagógica - PIP) and the school political pedagogical strategy (Projeto Político Pedagógico - PPP). The **Plano de Intervenção Pedagógica (PIP)** is a program developed by the Secretary of Education of Minas Gerais (SEE-MG) according to which schools are expected to elaborate a "strategic pedagogical intervention" plan based on the results of external evaluations (RESOLUÇÃO SEE Nº 2.197, DE 26 DE OUTUBRO DE 2012). The intention of this program is to make pedagogical coordinators and teachers aware of the performance of each of last year's cycle performance, and further discuss, analyze the data in order to construct strategies to improve student's performance (Brooke et al, 2008). In parallel, schools should readjust their **Political Pedagogical Plan (PPP)** on the basis of the diagnostics received from the external test results. In this sense, the use of SIMAVE results is considered to orientate school internal practices through the internal management of schools (Brooke et al, 2006). School principals are in fact incentivized to use national test results to elaborate a political pedagogical plan, monitor the quality of its education, implement accountability instruments or direct incentives on continuous professional development (cf. MANUAL DIRETOR, SIMAVE 2013)¹⁴.

In terms of consequences, those schools with worse results receive visits from a technical and competent pedagogical team (*equipe pedagógica*) to discuss and punctually work with the identified problems in the external evaluations.

2) In a second moment (2008-2013) - referred to as "*Estado para resultados*" of the managerial chock, the use of SIMAVE became more evident for establishment of educational objectives and targets (Brooke et al, 2006). Also, during this period the evaluations were framed in what can be considered to be a bureaucratic form of accountability (see Verger and Parcerisa, 2017; Shipp and White, 2009), based on an outcome-based and result-driven logic to monitor and evaluate educational policies. This can be seen, for instance, with the establishment of the **Acordo de Resultados** (SEE/MG, 2011), a results agreement between the Secretary of Education and the school regarding school's objectives, results and actions: the aim was the fulfillment of the established state goals through the alignment of institutions and people in order to achieve results and objectives defined in its program (Augusto and Saraiva, 2012). SIMAVE is therefore considered to have passed from being an innovatory and cooperative project to one concentrated only on results (Neto, 2013). Schools were institutionally evaluated based on the agreement through the **Avaliação Desempenho Institucional**. Amongst goals to be achieved in the agreement, were performance indicators of SIMAVE external evaluations: this meant that the responsibility for final results was divided between teachers, principals and all the school's staff. In

¹⁴ "Dear School principals, the external evaluations, which compose the SIMAVE evaluation system, enable the definition of public policies, aimed at improving the quality of education and to give schools subsidies to redirecting their pedagogical projects, looking for a major efficiency of their actions" (translated from MANUAL DIRETOR, SIMAVE 2013).

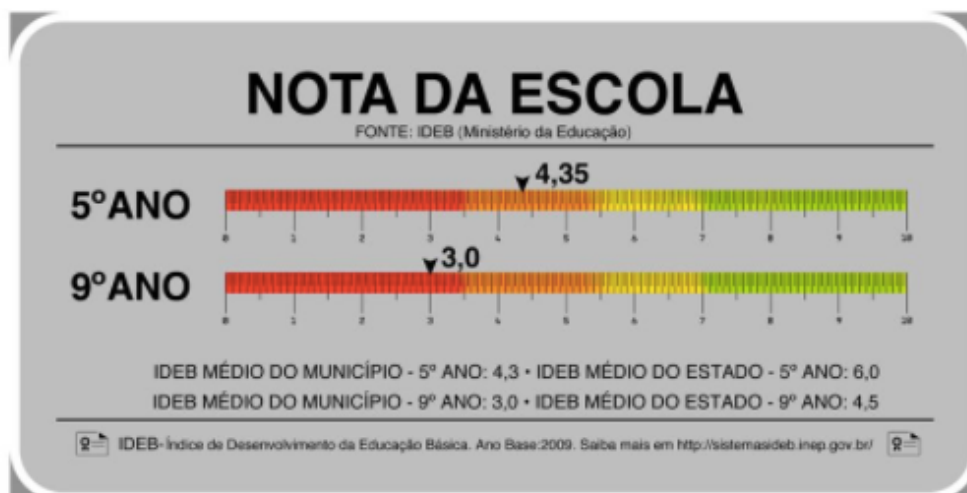
addition, the achievement of the results' targets was also one of the main criterias for an internal teacher evaluation implemented in 2009: the **Avaliação de Desempenho Individual (ADI)**.

In terms of consequences, financial rewards and sanctions were attached to the achievement of the established results, thus becoming *hard-stake accountability* tools (Brooke et al, 2006; Benamino and Souza, 2012). In fact, the aim of financial bonuses (law 17.600/2008) was to incentivize the achievement of the targets established in the *Acordo de Resultados*, in other words, to “stimulate, value and emphasize managers and organs or entities who reach their objectives and the set targets” (Cap I, Seção I lei 17.600/2008). Both school and teacher evaluations were thus attached to what is considered the “new logic of productivity awards” (Brooke et al, 2008): at the institutional level, schools, which reached at least 70% of the established results were entitled to a financial bonus - **Premio Gestao Escolar** (lei 17.600/2008), as well as other benefits such as increased autonomy and resources. However sanctions could include loss of public office for principals and leadership team and the loss of the bonus and prerogatives established in the *Acordo*. At the individual level, those publicly contracted teachers were entitled to receive a Productivity Award (**Premio Produtividade**) (law 17.600/2008) – known among teachers as 14th salary – as well as career development when results in the individual evaluation was above 70% (Resolution n.7.110 /2009). Due to these conditions, the award is also considered “a mechanism of competition among schools and teachers in a meritocratic logic distanced from the principles of equity and social justice” (Augusto, 2012: 8).

3) As a third and final reform moment (2013 -) we can acknowledge a backward return to *low-stake* accountability. In fact, the financial bonus was suspended in the years 2013 and 2014, due to what can be considered both technical, ideological and material reasons (interviews with key informants of ALMG¹⁵). In addition, in 2013, the government of Minas Gerais obliged schools to exhibit IDEB rankings out of the schools, as can be seen in the picture here below; this action is considered a way to inform and stimulate parents' involvement, increase transparency and school's continuous monitoring of student's learning (educacao.mg). However, it is also considered to have been accepted with controversies and resistance by school's leadership team and teachers, since it stigmatizes poor performing schools and schools with low socio-economic composition (todospelaeducacao.org, 2012).

¹⁵ Interviews conducted to politicians of PSDB and PT of Assembleia Legislativa Minas Gerais (ALMG) in the context of Reformed project (Minas Gerias October – December 2017).

Figure 2: Exposition of IDEB rankings in Minas Gerais schools



Source: MEC (IDEB)

Finally, in the case of Minas Gerais, the assessments and accountability tools are linked with school curricular reforms. As previously described, schools have great margin of maneuver for adapting school plans, including subjects, curriculum, and so on; however, the re-adaptations made are heavily related to the external exams pressures and their curriculum-oriented nature (Barbosa, 2013; Brooke et al, 2006). On one side, this comes from the lack of impact of school pedagogical bulletins and other traditional methods to inform teachers, which have led to the definition of an official curriculum with standard elements to be achieved in each cycle (Brooke et al, 2006). On the other, as it is designed, SIMAVE assessments not only reveals the scores but also the knowledge and competencies expected in each cycle and educational levels; SIMAVE also reveals the matrixes used to prepare the test items, and explicitly refers to the fact that these are based and inspired from the content of the Curriculum Basico Comun (CBC)¹⁶. As a consequence, one of the expectations is for schools to identify critical issues based on the external evaluations, which need to be improved and which require major attention, especially in Mathematics and Portuguese language (Bolletim pedagogico PROEB/PROALFA, 2008); This is also clearly stated in the preface of the Secretary of Education's curricular proposal, where curriculum relevance is explicitly connected to the elaboration of a school strategic plan based on the external evaluations¹⁷.

¹⁶ "A reference matrix for large-scale evaluation, which is used for the elaboration of test items, is a representative sample of the CBC and contemplates capacities which are considered of fundamental importance and which can be collocated in multiple choice tests" (translated from Bolletim Pedagogico PROEB/PROALFA 2008);

¹⁷ "The importance of the CBC is justified as a basis for the elaboration of the annual evaluation Programa de Avaliação da Educação Básica (PROEB), for the Programa de Avaliação da Aprendizagem Escolar (PAAE) and for the establishment of a target plan for each school" (Translated from preface of Secretary of Education (SEE) Curricular (CBC) proposal).

2.2.3 Undesired effects and controversial outcomes

The fact that external tests in Brazil (i.e SAEB, Prova Brasil) are curriculum-based, and not competence-based, has consequences on the politics of curriculum design and goals which student should achieve (Benamino and Souza, 2012; Brooke et al, 2006); however this may also trigger unintended outcomes such as narrowing of the curriculum and the use of a highly technical language (Brooke et al, 2006).

As outcomes of the type of performance-based accountability in place, the literature also highlights other generated unintended effects such as a reduction of school autonomy (Augusto, 2013), and the triggering of opportunistic behaviors such as teaching to the test and student selection (Andrade, 2008). In addition, schools practice in a generalized (although informal way) ability grouping; and this is related to triage practices related to the test (key informant – former participant in the creation of the SIMAVE/ PROALFA).

Above all, accountability instruments based on results of external tests are considered to have had important repercussions both on teacher's practices and identities (Olivera e Duarte, 2012; Barbosa, 2013; Borges e Sa, 2015). Such bureaucratic, high stake and performance-based accountability policies are seen as altering teacher's practices and pedagogical focus (Augusto e 2012; Hypolyto et al, 2012; De Castro et al, 2013). Indeed, "teacher's action and work is being formulated on the basis of performance indicators, ruled by a major preoccupation with results deriving from a decentralized and autonomous policy and with the necessity to comply with targets and results" (translated from De Castro et al, 2013).

On one side, teachers consider external evaluations help evaluate student learning and give more attention to the learning process (Borges e Sa, 2015); however, on the other side, since content is externally defined, teachers feel limited in their professional autonomy (Barbosa, 2013). Another consequence is the intensification of teaching work and sense of responsibility (Olivera e Duarte, 2012; Barbosa, 2013): teachers are in fact implied in a number of extra activities such as analysis of results and administrative tasks, however without sufficient time or training to do so (Barbosa, 2013). Teachers also reported that these accountability policies made them feel auto-responsible for the school's classification in evaluations, given the fact that institutional bonuses were based on results of student's external tests, without considering other factors involved that could affect the performance (Olivera and Duarte, 2012; Borges and Sa, 2015). In addition, by introducing a set of regulations, by which teachers and professionals are made responsible for the performance of their work, has led to new demands posed on teachers, such as increase in control, supervision and pressure on improving student's test results and school's performance (Hypolito et al, 2012: 138).

In this sense, schools (and individual teachers) are held accountable for the achievement of academic and pedagogical results. We can link this to what Ball (2005; 2008) describes as being a "performative culture", based on "invisible managerial pedagogies" (Ball, 2005: 545), where performance outcomes and evaluations are used as parameters of productivity and quality of teacher's work. In the same line, managerial reforms of such nature are considered to hold intrinsic paradoxes for teachers: promoting active learning, autonomy and problem solving, but also controlling what teachers teach through standardize tests, target setting and competitive formulas (Verger and Altynieken, 2013); "requesting more responsibilities for teachers but on the other hand

advocating their de-professionalization”, since they are asked to do more even when their conditions might be poorer (Verger and Altynieken, 2013: 9).

As an ultimate effect, research in Minas Gerais acknowledged that these reforms and mechanisms have led to teacher’s de-motivation, frustration and stress (Barbosa, 2013); in fact, due to these pressures, it is acknowledged that accountability reforms have been received with resistance from a wide number of teachers (Olivera et al, 2012), which poses in question the effective implementation of their objectives.

Chapter 3 – Literature review and Theoretical framework

3.1. The role of principals in mediating SAWA regimes

3.1.1 The changing role, tasks and identity of principals under accountability regimes

The policy environment, characterized by increased school-based management and decentralization of responsibility on one side, and centrally defined frameworks of curriculum, standards and outcomes on the other, is considered to have influence on the tasks, roles and challenges that principal's face (Brauckmann, 2015; Caldwell, 1998; Bredeson and Rose, 2007). Indeed, school leaders face numerous responsibilities and demands at a time, which include responding to instructional, financial and managerial requirements. They are required to pay attention to multiple aspects and processes, such as provide vision and school goals, achieve goals and priorities, ensure good teaching and learning, monitor and overview curriculum and student's results; strategically manage and allocate resources, amongst others (Caldwell, 1998; Day et al, 2008). In other words, the role of principals in SAWA regimes has changed internationally, shifting from a traditional to a "new emerging role" (Caldwell, 1998) based on a new and large set of responsibilities and expectations. In addition, it is also considered that the duties and workload of principals have intensified (Brauckmann, 2015; Caldwell, 1998; Bredeson and Rose, 2007), which has in turn also led to increased stress and disenchantment with the profession (Lock and Lummis, 2014).

Also the priorities of school leaders have changed. For instance, in Australia, school principals spend much more time on "compliance tasks"¹⁸ than on improving teaching and learning activities of principals (Lock and Lummis, 2014). Furthermore, there seems to be a mismatch between task priority and time allocation: both in Germany and in the US, it has been found that, although school leaders consider instructional activities, such as curriculum improvement and development of student competencies to be school central objectives and leadership priorities, the majority of their time is spent in administrative and management tasks, such as budget and school finance or personnel administration (Brauckman, 2015; Bredeson and Kose, 2007). In order words, as argued by Meyer and Macmillan (2013), the priorities for school principals have shifted, from instructional activities, concerned "with the creation, delivery, and assessment of curriculum and pedagogy" (Meyer and Macmillan, 2013:5) to administrative and managerial ones, related to the resolution of

¹⁸ These regarded "principal's attempt to comply with external demands for expenditure, student performance and school improvement" (Lock and Lummis, 2014: 60).

immediate issues: “While instructional leadership is important, these principals suggest that immediacy of other, time-dependent issues often take precedence over and over-shadow the more complex, yet less immediate, issues associated with instructional leadership” (Meyer and Macmillan R., 2013: 6). In the same way, Heffernan (2017) found that school leaders were looking for quick-term solutions, such as improving school data and not likely to invest in long-term strategies for school improvement.

It can be also said that by shifting the focus of school priorities to externally required demands, accountability policies have influenced and altered the identity and perception of principal’s work. Indeed, as argued by Ball (2003), the vision and principles that policymakers have about school and education influences how teachers and leaders think about them, how they perceive their role and what actions they take accordingly. This “performative” (or also referred to as “audit”) culture is characteristic of a policy environment characterized by market and new public management principles (Anderson, 2007), performance outcomes and measures (Ball, 2003), in which “the performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection” (Ball, 2003: 216).

Accordingly, schools become business models and their leaders expected to act as “entrepreneurs” who respond to material demands by restructuring schools, and raising their efficiency (Anderson, 2007). Similarly, Yemini (2015) argues that principals in decentralized contexts demanding high accountability should be regarded as “entrepreneurs” who “not only comply with institutional pressures (improving academic achievement) and regulations (demands for accountability), but also take a proactive role to advance initiatives and changes that reflect their own interests and respond to the needs of their particular school” (Yemini, 2015: 2). In another way, being asked to comply with both internal and external accountability demands, the “new manager” becomes the “new hero of educational reform” who instills attitudes in which workers at the same feel accountable and committed to the organization (Ball, 2003). School leaders who work in such policy environments experience emotions such as the fear for non-complying with external demands (Pinto, 2015), as well as conflicting and counterintuitive impulses between the “performativity demands” (those deriving from what is expected to do) and passion and professional commitments (Blackmore, 2004). This is also referred to as “institutional schizophrenia” (Blackmore, 2004), as a situation of emotional distress where principals need to decide whether to comply with externally set regulations (external bureaucratic accountability) or to listen to their professional judgment (professional internal accountability). By experiencing and internalizing the external pressures, the subjective identity of professionals has been altered: in fact, “the new teacher and administrator are put in a position in which they must look to market and test-based forms of accountability for direction rather than their professional instincts, training, associations, or unions” (Anderson, 2007: 19). This also means that, influenced by external accountability pressures and managerial principles, principals and teachers tend to increase self-regulation and control of emotions (Blackmore, 2004). In line with increased expectations, principals also tend to view themselves as independent and not in need of support (Heffernan, 2017), thus ultimately shaping the worth, quality and value of what it means to be a professional (Ball, 2003).

At the same time, authors highlight the fact that influenced by external accountability demands, a new system of ethical principles and values have emerged, mainly based on the “ethics of competition and performance”, increased individualization, self-interest and pragmatism (Ball, 2003). In addition, this has impact on equity issues: the “new professional” is not interested in social issues, values or social justice and equity but on entrepreneurship and raising competition amongst schools (Anderson, 2007). Therefore, as argued by Keddie (2015), concerns of student’s equity raise the significance of moral leadership; and that therefore the debate and focus should shift from “accountability” to “professional responsibility” (Craston, 2013).

3.1.2 School leadership as practices adopted in response to conflicting perceived pressures

The changing policy environment has posed principals in a complex position, often with external accountability demands (largely driven by market, bureaucratic and legal mechanisms) contradicting internal professional values and interests (i.e moral, professional, and political areas of accountability). These multiple sources of accountability pressures, although not always incompatible, may in fact generate conflicting accountability pressures on school leaders (Shippis and White, 2009; Gonzales and Firestone, 2013) or what Normore (2004) describes as a situation of “the edge of chaos”. In the following section, I will highlight how principals perceive, interpret and respond to these changes and complexities. In this sense, I will consider school leadership specifically in terms of practices, which are shaped by principal’s *sense making*, and adopted in response to accountability perceived pressures.

Interpretative framework: sense making and decision-making

Based on a cognitive and interpretative framework (Spillane et al, 2002b; Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2016), it is considered that principals understand, perceive and prescribe meanings to the messages coming from the policy reforms. In fact, principals can have very different views of what accountability means, relating it for instance with test scores, academic growth, attendance, transparency, funding, market-based accountability, parents or student development (Ford, 2016). This process of meaning ascribing can result from different so-called “triggers” (Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2016), such as previous understandings of the policy or pre-existing worldviews: “as bricoleurs, school leaders rely on previous tools and materials from their work experience with past policies and apply them to new contexts. Through an interaction with what they know and new demands, they create their own interpretations of reform demands” (Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2016: 687). Shirrel (2016) also consider principal’s time in service to be a relevant factor influencing the sense given to the policy reform: “the first year on the job is a time when new principals’ pre-conceived ideas about their roles may conflict with their organizational socialization into the realities of their schools [...] these conflicts trigger “sense-making” processes for new principals, during which principals attempt to understand, interpret, and respond to their new realities (Shirrell, 2016: 561).

In addition, it is also considered that the perceptions and pressures regarding accountability demands may vary within staff members (Gawlick, 2015; Ford, 2016) as well as between principals belonging to different schools. For instance, according to Shirrell (2016), principals in low performing schools experience more pressure and tension between different accountability pressures. On another hand, Ford (2016) found that voucher school principals working in lower achieving schools had lower trust and more negative views and relationship with the government department. Therefore, we can conceptualize the process of sense-making as “an active process of constructing meaning from present stimuli, mediated by prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs and values that is embedded in the social context within which people work” (Shillon and Shechter, 2016: 684).

Furthermore, it is important to consider the sense making and meaning-making ascribed because these interpretations ultimately shape principal’s adopted practices (Spillane and Diamond, 2002a; Gawlick, 2015). Indeed, as pointed out by Shillon and Shechter (2016), the process of sense making implies three interrelated stages of creation, interpretation and enactment, whereby the enactment process implies that “people incorporate new information and eventually take action based on the interpretation they have created”. In fact, having different views and understandings of accountability can lead to the adoption of different attitudes and practices. For instance, according to Gawlick (2015), if principals perceived the purpose and importance of the accountability to be indicating “the reality where student’s are”, then they would adopt strategies to respond to student diversity in school; otherwise, if for example considering accountability as embodied in professional development, then they would sustain teacher’s learning opportunities. In another way, according to Gunnulfson and Møller (2016), the creation of school’s internal structures depends on the school leader’s understanding of the source of accountability. In addition, the understanding about the reform may have impacts on school leaders’ decision of only focusing on some aspects of the reform (Galwick, 2015). In this sense: “school leaders served as sense makers because they drew on their own conceptions of what new policy ideas entails as they decided what to emphasize, discuss, and implement” (Gawlick, 2015: 12). Ultimately, this also means that principals are actively constructing a new accountability environment: “by placing new information into cognitive frameworks, individuals not only develop a sense of what is going on, but also develop a sense of how to engage in the situation” (Shillon and Shechter, 2016: 685).

Between external & internal accountability pressures

A set of articles highlight the fact that school leaders are “caught in the middle” between the external mandates and the school internal accountability forces. For instance, school leaders may experience tensions between the need of building trust, commitment and collegiality on one side, and holding teachers accountable and controlling their instruction on the other (Shirrell, 2016), aligning teacher’s instruction to standardize tests instead of adapting it to teacher’s professional standards (Knapp and Feldman, 2012), or to focus on short-term student gains instead of creating an inclusive agenda for all (Day, 2005). In this sense, principals are considered “managers in the middle” between the school and policy levels, at the same time dependent on both levels for the successful implementation of the policies (Spillane et al, 2002a). As a response, school leaders

may either adopt the most strategic leadership practices in order to comply with the accountability regime in place, or may decide to negotiate, manage and prioritize the tensions between them.

- *Compliance/Alignment*

Principals are found to comply with external demands, by aligning internal school accountability to the external policy demands (Knapp and Feldman, 2012). One way is to prioritize and allocate more time to managerial, administrative tasks and short-term strategies as opposed to instructional ones, as we have seen before. In addition, this is achieved through internalizing the expectations, transmitting them to the staff and spreading responsibility to school staff for meeting the expected results (Knapp and Fieldman, 2012). In another way, school leaders are found to engage in both formal and informal conversations with teachers and colleagues on policy messages, in order to make sure they had a shared understanding of the accountability demands and the respective practices to adopt (Gawlick, 2015). Shirrell (2016) on his side found that principals use commitment as a way of motivating teachers to make the improvements required from the accountability demands. In addition, these developed strategies may not only be based on external motivations, but may also part of principal's sense of good practice for improving the teaching and learning of school (Knapp and Feldman, 2012), thus becoming school internal accountability tools. In line with this, school leaders may also use the external accountability demands as a way of legitimizing internal school accountability and personal interests; in this line, Bredeson and Kose (2007), have found that principals used external demands to improve the teaching and learning in schools.

- *Managing and Negotiating*

Secondly, school leaders may use the internal accountability tools as a way of managing and overcoming the conflicting perceived pressures. Gonzales and Firestone (2013) found for instance that school leaders in the US responded to their internal responsibility and consciousness first, as a way of overcoming the multiple conflicting accountability pressures. Similarly, Shirrell (2016) found that principals who experience more tension between teacher's commitment and external accountability tended to prioritize building trust with the staff members that exerting control over them.

In addition, it is consider that principals can negotiate the tensions between the experienced pressures. For instance, principals can distinguish "professional" from "personal" relationships in order to exert control over teachers but at the same time maintaining their commitment high (Shirrell, 2016). In the same line, Pollock and Winston's (2015) research in Canada highlights the fact that school leaders negotiate between conflicting mandates by prioritizing community needs, while still complying with their bureaucratic and legal responsibilities. Another way that school principals manage the tensions is by giving a specific image to teachers: for instance, building trust and commitment but at the same time enforcing limits and boundaries (Shirrell, 2016). Also Spillane and colleagues (2012) underline the fact that principals do consider external demands, however still acknowledging the importance of internal school aspects such as organizational legitimacy and integrity.

- *Prioritizing and Advocating*

Finally, principals can prioritize internal professional accountability before external expectations. According to Pinto (2015) principals comply with external demands, without critically being able to dissent or criticize policy mandates; however, other authors argue that principals are reflexive and responsive actors, who are aware of their staff's emotions and stress (Wieczorek and Theorais, 2015). In fact, many studies have found school leaders to prioritize teacher's growth, wellbeing and collaboration before external mandates (Hoppey, 2010; Day, 2005; Derrington and Campbell, 2017; Wieczorek and Theorais, 2015). This is done, for instance, by holding on to their core personal values and beliefs although in contrast within external and performative neo-liberal expectations: thus, being people-centered, focusing on school community, supporting dialogue and trust with school members (Day, 2005). Another way is by selectively deciding which policy tool to support, according to their professional judgment (Derrington and Campbell, 2017): for example, choosing not to observe teachers while testing their students or not using student test scores as a means of teacher evaluation or finally, by being more responsive to the feelings and needs of its staff despite external pressures (Wieczorek and Theorais 2015; Hoppey, 2010). In practice, principals were found to display trust in teachers, listen to their ideas, concerns and problems and protected them from de-moralizing high-stake pressures (Hoppey, 2010).

Furthermore, by prioritizing internal accountability before external mandates, some authors argue that principals become "political subjects" (Niesche, 2013) or "moral leaders" (Keddie, 2015) who actively advocate for social justice values, protecting equity and student's best interest. For instance, this is done through prioritizing student's learning as opposed to external test results (Gunnulfson and Møller), or distributing resources and supporting lower performing students: in other words, "a morally focused leadership will be concerned with more than increasing attainment on external measures of performance (Fullan, 2002). In relation to equity, this will entail drawing on external modes of accountability in productive and equitable, rather than unproductive and inequitable, ways" (Keddie, 2015: 12).

3.1.3 The mediating role of practices and styles of leadership: unpacking the subject and object of action

Due to their formal leadership role, principals are considered to play a crucial role in successfully implementing the policy changes at the school level. In fact, according to the literature, school leaders can make a difference both on student's achievements and on the way teachers receive and implement the policy reforms. In this sense, principals act as "mediating agents" (Luis and Robinson; 2012), by adopting strategies and behaviors to increase student test results (Reardon, 2011; Neumann and Mohr, 2011) or influencing the internal processes, relationships, climate and resources (Shaked H. and Schechterb C., 2017), that sustain the improvement of teaching and learning.

In the following section, I will present principal's mediating practices and leadership styles by discussing their specific objectives, and they way they operate, distinguishing between *direct*

mechanisms, which operate through instructional program and student interaction, and *indirect* mechanisms through school organizational features. In addition, although I will be also referring to what are considered classifications of principal's leadership "styles" (i.e. *instructional*, *transformational* and *distributed*), I will try to unpack these concepts and mainly discuss the areas of work, practices, behaviors and processes underlining them. I consider this more relevant due to the fact that leadership styles are constructs, which have been differently defined and conceptualized, and also constituted of very different aspects, which ultimately renders more complex assessing their effectiveness as a whole.

1) *Direct mechanisms to increasing student test scores*

Instructional and curricular practices

According to the literature, principals mediate the implementation of accountability reforms by working in what are considered to be "strategic leadership" areas of work (Cosner and Jones, 2016). Many of these areas are related to the influence principals have on defining and managing the school's instructional program. In this sense, a learning-centered and instructional leadership¹⁹ approach is considered to be highly effective to raise student's performance (Robinson, 2008; Reardon, 2011). In fact, effective school leaders should identify problems, set goals and develop a school curricular program accordingly (Cosner and Jones, 2016). First of all, goals should be attainable, clear, high priority and visible; based on a process of problem identification and prioritization. In fact, the principal must first be clear about what matters and what the focus will be for the school (Neumann and Mohr, 2011). Further, it is considered that these core values and goals should be adjusted to the school plan, which should be detailed and based on improvement effective strategies to address the identified problems (Cosner and Jones, 2016). In addition, in order to meet and align external accountability demands to internal school ones, school leaders may need to review the language, the scope of the curriculum and the ways of delivering instruction: this means for instance, using language of student's assessments (such as "targets" gaps") in everyday school's internal activity; on another side, it could also mean differentiating instruction to raise student test scores (Knapp and Feldman, 2012).

Another important aspect that emerges is school leader's *use of data*. In fact, school leaders collect and analyze data in order to identify problems that impact school performance and student learning, and therefore use data for curriculum and classroom improvement (Bigham e Riney, 2014). This data use activity is further explained and justified in the context of accountability pressures: "given the aggressive benchmarks and short timelines of accountability systems and sanctions, improvement strategies should be enacted in rapid cycles of inquiry that rely on timely and frequent data collection. Frequent data collection and analysis is essential for determining strategy progress and considering strategy refinement" (Cosner and Jones, 2016: 46). In addition, it is considered that "leadership approaches to test instruction", that include assessing student growth through testing data, and using this data to improve curriculum, bring to increased student's

¹⁹ *Instructional leadership* is traditionally conceptualized as those practices evolving around curriculum and instruction and aimed at improving teaching and learning in schools (Robinson et. al, 2008; Hallinger, 2003). These are comprised of ten different areas, amongst which defining and managing the instructional program (Hallinger, 2003).

outcomes (De Moss, 2002). On another hand, however, data could also serve to legitimate selective strategies used to increase school performance (Gunnulfsen and Møller, 2016).

Principal/student interaction

A set of articles emphasizes school leader's adoption of direct practices to raise overall student's motivation and performance. In fact, it is considered that student's engagement and excitement to meaningful learning is fundamental to increase their preparation, and that school leaders play a critical role in improving their achievements (Neumann and Mohr, 2011, Silva et al, 2011). These encompass increasing individual student's academic foundations in test-based subjects (De Moss, 2002) or promoting effective pedagogical strategies to enhance student's motivation and excitements in areas tested in standardize assessments (Neuman and Mohr, 2011). Another effective instructional strategy is considered principal's direct communication and involvement with students (Silva et al, 2011). In fact, through an experimental study, Silva and colleagues (2011) found that directly talking with a student on her testing score and developing ad-hoc future plan with her was an effective strategy to increase her motivation and final performance level significantly.

2) *Indirect mechanisms through organizational features*

On another hand, school leaders mediate the implementation of accountability regimes indirectly through the influence on school internal processes, such as relationship, school climate, teacher capacity and resources. In fact, school leaders work in a social organizational environment and therefore depend on school's staff and internal resources for the effective implementation of reforms (Spillane et al, 2012). This is even more relevant when considering that teachers are at the frontline for delivering the instructional programs to students, and that their motivation and capacity influence the implementation of accountability policies (Leithwood et al, 2006). Therefore, some studies have highlighted the crucial role of *principal's leadership process*, referring to the way in which they engage with teachers to improve instructional strategies and facilitate change.

Communication structures

In the first place, the creation of communication structures is identified as a crucial leadership practice under accountability regimes (Wlaker et al, 2014; Crum and Shereman, 2008). This is because teacher's beliefs and values influence how teachers understand, receive and implement new instructional strategies (Leithwood et al, 2002; Mullford and Silins, 2011). Therefore, school leaders should support a *collective sense-making process* (Shillon and Scheter, 2016), by effectively communicating a clear understanding of vision, goals and sense of purpose (Cosner and Jones, 2016; Harris and Chapman, 2002). This idea of aligning people and practices is conceptualized as a "value-addition" leadership approach (Pan and Chen, 2011), centered on the development of a shared vision, "calling together administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders to develop a community of practice that facilitates organizational learning to improve educational quality" (Pan and Chen, 2011: 343).

Professional learning communities

In addition, under school accountability reforms, teachers may be asked to adapt to changes, such as the instructional content or ways of assessing students (Neumann and Mohr, 2011). Therefore, especially in outcome-based accountability regimes, school principals hold a role in building school capacity and managing change (Crum and Shereman, 2008). This is for instance achieved by increasing teacher's motivation and capacity (Leithwood et al, 2002) or their willingness to learn, risk (Wolf et al, 2010) and therefore respond in a non-rigid way to the policy changes (Daly, 2009). In this sense, effective areas of principal's work are considered to be the support of teacher's self-efficacy (Finnigan, 2010), capacity building and ongoing creation of learning opportunities (Mullford and Sillins, 2011; Cosner and Jones, 2016); for example, this may be achieved by supporting teacher's data analysis capacities (Gawlick, 2015) or engaging in conversations on student's learning (Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). In this sense, it has been found that sustaining a professional learning community raises teacher's professionalism (Tschannenn-Moran, 2009) and that variables related to capacity building and professional development had more impact on classroom instruction and on student outcomes than other variables (Mullford and Sillins, 2011; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008).

Trust and empowerment

Furthermore, especially under high-stake accountability regimes, increasing teacher's morale and self-esteem can be crucial for implementing multiple change (Harris and Chapman, 2012). School principals can therefore play a role in empowering teachers, hence encouraging opinions, supporting them to lead innovation, which in turn has been found to increase teacher's openness, commitment and effectiveness for improving goals and plans (Harris and Chapman, 2012; Daly, 2009). Finally, another relevant mediating factor that emerged in the literature is the creation and support of trust between principals and teachers and the development of trusting and respectful relationships (Finningan, 2012, Wolf et al; Daly, 2009; Louis and Robinson, n.d; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). Indeed, principal's flexible and opened orientation and trust towards teachers has been found to increase teacher's professionalism (Tschannenn-Moran, 2009) as well as predicting a less-rigid response from teachers to policy changes (Daly, 2009).

All of these previously identified aspects, such as the creation of a shared vision, communicating and empowering teachers are related to a specific leadership style, namely *transformational leadership*, adapted in the educational environment by Leithwood and colleagues (1994). It encompasses areas such as offering vision, intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support by showing concern about personal needs, and acting as a model that is consistent with organizational values (Leithwood, 1994). According to authors, it is considered one of the most efficient and effective styles under accountability regimes, since it implies the capacity of leading towards a vision (Kurland et al, 2010) and managing change (Leithwood and Jantzi 2006), at the same time sustaining teacher's self-efficacy, motivation, enthusiasm and commitment (Leithwood et al, 2002).

In addition, by empowering teachers and supporting their leadership capacities, questions of power centralization and distribution come into place. In fact, practices of empowerment also imply increasing professional autonomy, using less control, delegating and being more willing to share their decision-making and power with others (Harris and Chapman, 2012; Crum and Shereman, 2008). In this sense, studies point out to the crucial role of “micro political strategies” such as the use of *distributed* (Spillane et al, 2004; Harris, 2008), *shared* (Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008) or *collaborative* (Heck and Hallinger, 2010) leadership that are found to improve the quality of educational experiences and facilitate organizational change (Daly, 2009; Harris, 2008; Heck and Hallinger, 2010; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008).

On the other hand however, school principals are still held accountable for school effectiveness. In fact, it is also considered that a true democratic and distributed leadership is difficult to achieve in low-performing schools, since “organizations in crisis centralize rather than decentralize their operations” (Finnigan, 2010: 180). In a similar way, May and Supovitz (2011) argue that in order for the change to be more meaningful, these practices should be targeted and oriented to specific teachers and not distributed to the entire staff. In this case, it is interesting to consider the *scope* of the leadership’s effort, in terms of “the extent to which principals target their instructional assistance efforts on a subset of teachers or the entire faculty” (May and Supovitz, 2011: 336).

Teacher Evaluation and Accountability

Finally, some other authors highlight the relevance of mediating practice such as the responsibility of school staff and the creation of systems of accountability and evaluation (Mulfurd and Silins, 2011). This is especially relevant if we consider types of reforms such as bureaucratic and performance-based accountability, which focus on evaluation of school outcomes through student’s achievements. This may be instance achieved through monitoring teacher performance (Finnigan, 2012) through visits and informal feedbacks (Louis and Robinson, n.d) or also, through the use of data. In fact, it is considered that school leaders use student data test scores, survey results and observational data to responsabilize school staff or pointing out to aspects of school’s practices which should have been improved (Knapp and Feldman, 2012). This way, it is considered that data mainly becomes tools of accountability for leaders, and a means of transaction with their staff (Knapp and Feldman, 2012).

3.1.4 Acknowledging the influence of contingent factors

Although I have outlined what are considered to be the most effective leadership styles and practices under accountability regimes, it is important to also highlight their contingency. Indeed, there are several external and internal school and individual factors, which may influence school’s enactment (Braun et al, 2011) and hence also principal’s practices and their effectiveness.

External factors

First of all, policy contexts and accountability environments are considered to influence leadership practices (Shipps and White, 2009; Winston and Pollock, 2015; Braun et al, 2011). Principal’s

practices may be in fact associated with entrepreneurship under a market accountability regime, with creativity and efficiency strategies in a managerial accountability context, or parents' and teacher's empowerment in a decentralized and professional model (cf. annex 2). In another way, according to Braun and colleagues (2011), head teachers may be externally influenced by school's position in league tables or the financial support received by local authorities.

Professional and Institutional school factors

In addition, it is considered that principal's leadership practices depend on the presence of some enabling conditions; Day and colleagues (2008) calls these "moderators of successful leadership", such as school size, student's socio-economic background, organization's levels of trust, amongst others. For example, teacher's collective trust or sense of responsibility towards student's achievements is higher in schools with high-socio economic background (Van Maele and Van Houtte, 2012; Diamond and Spillane, 2004). In this sense, it is considered that student's intake; professional values and policy responses are strongly interrelated (Braun et al, 2011; Diamond and Spillane, 2004).

In another study, Finnigan (2010) found that more positive approaches as inclusive leadership, teacher-principal trust, and principal support for change, were found less in low-performing schools. This may be related to the fact that these practices require additional time as well as more human, social, cultural resources to be effectively carried out (Spillane et al., 2001) In addition, it has been found that instructional leadership is more present, where there is a clear academic mission and clear measurable goals focused on academic achievements of students (Hallinger, 2003).

The school size also plays a role here; indeed, when the number of organizational members increases, interpersonal interactions and principal's direct involvement in teaching and learning become more complex; hence, instructional leadership may result more difficult to pursue (Hallinger, 2003).

In terms of low and high performing school differences, Day (2005) sustains that principals working in challenging contexts, should build stronger communitarian structures based on a strong vision as a way of sustaining an inclusive and equitable educational agenda. On the other hand, principals in lower achieving schools tend to adopt more "instrumental" instructional strategies as a way of responding to immediate pressures and rapidly increasing student's performance (Diamond and Spillane, 2004). In a similar way, "principal support for change may have a stronger association with teacher expectancy in probation schools because of the need for these schools to improve quickly to meet the probation standard" (Finnigan, 2010).

Individual/personal characteristics

Principal's practices may also vary also according to teachers' characteristics. Indeed, the effective use of instructional leadership is associated with less qualified or younger teachers (Hallinger, 2003)²⁰.

²⁰ Hallinger (2003) conceptualizes instructional leadership as a top-down, directive approach "even though instructional leadership is explicitly focused on school improvement, it would be characterized as transactional in the sense that it seeks to manage and control organizational members to move towards a predetermined set of goal" (Hallinger, 2003: 338).

For what regards principal's characteristics, it is considered that in terms of gender, female principals experience less tension between their internal and external accountability pressures than male counterparts, and that their moral and professional obligations are better aligned (Shipps and White 2009). In another study (Court, 1998), shared and co-principal leadership has been found to be more present amongst women than amongst men. Although considered as an effective practice, this is considered to be challenging the "traditional and managerial notions of 'the principal'" in a hierarchical environment (Court, 1998). This comes with the conception of femininity as being traditionally portrayed as nurturing and teaching, and the assumption of men's managerial and authoritative values and practices as the norm for leadership (Court, 1998). In other words, "although the character of gendered leadership images may shift and change over time and place, hegemonic links between dominant forms of masculinity and authority/leadership keep getting reconstructed" (Court, 1998: 39).

Finally, other contingent aspects include principal's years of experience and "principal's factors", such as self-efficacy (Mc. Cullers and Bozeman; Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004), training, number of years as a principal and an assistant principal, and experience of the principal as a teacher (Bowers and White, 2014). In this context, principal's capacity is considered important. Indeed, school principals who are viewed as a resource and as legitimate leaders increase teacher's sense of support and encourage them to take risks (Finnigan, 2012; Finningan, 2010). These aspects are important because they influence the degree to which principals consider the external goals attainable or the skills needed to achieve these goals, hence ultimately influencing organizational and student's outcomes.

3.2 The role of the principals/school leadership in Brazilian policy and education system

3.2.1 School leadership's roles and responsibilities according to legislation

School principals in Brazil hold responsibilities and functions which encompass pedagogical, managerial, and administrative/financial areas. The role and competencies are legislated under Resolution SEE n° 1.812, of 2011, which states that school principals are the legal representatives of school and therefore they respond to all levels for the institution.

For what regards the pedagogical responsibilities, it is competency of the school principal to offer a quality instruction, which should be achieved through a good coordination and political pedagogical project (PPP). In addition, it is responsibility of the school principal to adopt strategies that would improve those difficulties encountered in student's evaluations. This is also the case for student's external evaluations results, where it is the school principal's responsibility to know the results, trace intervention strategies, disseminate results to the community and monitor instruction and learning in the school (Abreu, 2013). This is considered to be a specific aspect of pedagogical leadership, namely a strategic one for the whole institution (Santos, 2017: 24). In terms of human resource management, it is of responsibility of the school principal to organize the school

personnel, to contribute to their professional development, and to conduct the internal evaluation of school professionals (Resolução no 2.253/13).

Also in the administrative area, there are actions, which are of responsibility of the school principal, such as being accountable for his actions and keep school disciplined and in line with the legislation. The school principal should also keep the regional secretary (SRE) up to date with the situation of available places or to solicit other places to open (Resolução no 2.253/13).

Finally, in the financial area, it is required to school principal to maintain the functioning and legal adjustment of the *Caixa Escolar*. Resolution n. 1.812/2011 also highlights that it is school principal's function to look after the maintenance of the goods and fiscal school infrastructure, by accompanying the conditions of the goods and installations and when necessary, soliciting renovation/ building works.

However, school principals do not work alone, and it is important also to consider the role of other school leaders, as well as that of the entire *colegiado escolar* (school collegiality) and the *comunidade escolar* (school community). Indeed, the school principal is part of the so-called *equipe gestora*, which corresponds to the school leadership team. This is composed of the vice-principal, who is required to assume the tasks and role of the principal in his/her absence; the pedagogical coordinators or educational specialists (Especialista em Educação Básica /Coordenador Pedagógico) who mainly hold responsibilities in coordinating the school curricular and pedagogical activities, and the educational orientator ("orientador educacional"), who is mainly focused on disciplining student's behavior (cf. annex Table 3).

In addition, main school strategic decisions have to be taken collectively through the school collegiality (LDB/96), of which the school principal is at the presidency and is responsible for the functioning and coordination of its activities. The composition and functions of the school collegiality are disciplined by legislation 2.034/2012. According to this, the school collegiality integrates all professionals who work in the school as well as members of the school community, such as students and parents. It holds a deliberative function in terms of aspects of pedagogical, administrative and financial nature as well as a consultive function, when demanded by the school community. This means that it has competencies in elaborating the school pedagogical plan (PPP), the approval of the school calendar, accompanying the achievement of educational indicators, indicating candidates for the role of principals and members of the teacher evaluation commission.

3.2.2 The autonomy/accountability tension faced by school leaders in Brazil: between democratic school management and responsibility

In terms of school management, the LDB (1996) legislation has promoted a democratic school management model, base on democratic and participative school instruments. In practice, this is reflected in:

- The establishment of a school collegiality, which reflects idea of democratic school participation, where actions are to be taken on a collective and democratic basis;
- The inclusion and participation of the entire school community in the school collegiality;
- The conjunctive elaboration of a pedagogical plan (PPP);

- The democratic election of school principals;
- Pedagogical school autonomy (i.e curricular adaptation and teacher's autonomy in defining own planning and pedagogy);
- Financial autonomy through the decentralization of funds, such as the PDDE program.

However, it is also considered that these democratic principles are embedded in a “centralistic and managerial” accountability model (Augusto, 2012; 2013; Anandon e Garcia, 2015). This can for instance be seen in centralized mechanisms of monitoring school results, such as the alignment of school pedagogical plans (PIP) and projects (PPP) and curricular frameworks with externally established targets (i.e. SIMAVE indicators, Acordo de Resultados, IDEB) and with curricular standards (i.e CBC).

In this sense, authors consider that the autonomy given to school is relative, controlled and limited (Duarte et al, 2016; Da Silva e Alves). In fact, the allocated pedagogical autonomy is disciplined by external standardize assessments and the financial autonomy by criteria's for resource designation (Bitiati e Pires, n.d). Due to this, authors consider that the decentralization of school management has actually turned into devolution (“desconcentração”) of tasks, roles and responsibilities to the local sphere, without an effective devolution of decisional power at the school level (Da Silva e Alves, 2012)²¹.

This tension between decentralization/autonomy and accountability has also repercussions on principal's perceptions and responsibilities. In fact, the decentralization and autonomy of schools has increased school principal's responsibilities, who hold the “burden” of the entire management and administration of school and of its results (Carvalho, 2009 in Mariano et al, 2016). Principals are in fact responsible for signing the *Acordo de Resultados*, which means they have responsibility for the achievement of the agreed targets with external bodies. In addition, according to a democratic education model, they should achieve these objectives through a management model, which represents the interests of the entire school community. This means that they must establish a participatory and outcome-oriented regime at the same time (Mariano et al, 2016).

In this sense, the educational political project of the “Estado para Resultados” in Minas Gerais is considered to be characterized by two different lines: on one hand it is based on decentralization, autonomy, community and family presence (MINAS GERAIS, 2001 lei 14/7/2000); on the other, it is characterized by coordination, evaluation, responsibility, discipline and authority (Augusto e Saraiva, 2012; Augusto, 2012; Anandon e Garcia, 2015). Accordingly, the establishment of evaluation systems aims at “enhancing evaluation control and management mechanisms between the system, society and institutions” (lei 14/7/2000). Similarly, Olivera (2011) highlights that there has been a double characterization of the process: on one hand managerial and financial decentralization, on the other, a centralized character of evaluations and control system.

²¹ *Desconcentração* “consists in the delegation of functions, roles and responsibilities from the central sphere to the local sphere, however without the dislocation of public and economic decisional power through decentralization” (translated from Da Silva e Alves, 2012: 673).

In parallel, at the school level, authors consider there is a tension amongst participation and democratic principles on one side, and processes of control and individual responsibility experienced by school principals, on the other (Silva e Alves, 2009; Da Silva and Pires, 20; Duarte et al, 2016). This leads to a challenge for school principals to adopt a truly democratic practice in a “authoritative” managerial model (Quirino and Moreira, 2014). “In this context, the majority of principals finds themselves between two poles: meeting the managers' demands of hierarchical control on the educational institution in relation to school performance and, at the same time, experiencing the resistance of control by of the school community, and the challenges of scarcity of resources and overwork” (Duarte et al, 2016: 211).

In addition, being accountable for the entire school institution, is perceived by school principals as having intensified their duties and individual responsibility (Duarte et al, 2016). Also, the implementation of financial rewards to school results is considered to have intensified principal's work and their role in the management and organization of school (Da Silva e Alves, 2012). In turn, this has reflected in as well as anxiety for the delivery of results and development of actions and projects (Duarte et al, 2016).

3.2.3 Principal's (unattractive?) position

The position of school principals in Brazil is considered to be difficult and challenging one (Mariano et al, 2016); this is because of several reasons.

First of all, principals are legally required to have multiple administrative and managerial abilities and competencies, from planning, evaluating and organizing the school personnel, building and pedagogical strategy. According to Quirino and Moreira (2014), school principal's skills are composed of taxonomy of pedagogical, technical and political competencies. For some authors, however, the bureaucratic and technical dimension has a stronger role than the political pedagogical one (Santos e Da Silva, 2012). In fact, according to Santos (2017) 73,3% of principal's functions are related to the administrative area. School principals in Brasil are therefore generally referred to as “gestores” (managers) or “administrators” (administrators), where their roles totally invest the management of school organization and ultimately being responsible for achievement of school results and outcomes (Honorato, n.d). This is considered to reflect a neo-liberal paradigm, where school principals are asked to hold a managerial function, through administrative, planning, and evaluative actions (Santos e Da Silva, 2012). In other words, according to Paro (2010), the conceptualization of a school leader is not very different to that of any other management of a capitalist company.

Secondly, authors highlight that there is a gap between the legally required competencies and the ones perceived by school principals to be the most effective and necessary: indeed Santana and colleagues (2013) argue that school principals consider behavioral, social and relational competencies more important than the required technical capacities. In addition, some authors highlight the role of “pedagogical leadership”, defined as school orientation, accompanying and planning activities - such as assisting classes, pedagogically orienting professors and promoting academic projects (Honorato, n.d: 12), to be fundamental for the improvement of school effectiveness and student test results (Abreu, 2013; Honorato, n.d).

However, these required competencies and skills are not always present and adequately supported in their training (Santos, 2017; Mariano et al, 2016). In fact, principals are democratically appointed, but this does not happen on the basis of capacities. In fact, since the direct election from the school community only requires being a teacher and to pass an examination certificate²², principals start their role not having any specific preparation (Santos, 2017): this means that they pass from being a teacher to holding and executive financial, administrative and managerial functions. In terms of training, there is no initial mandatory training on administrative or managerial functions. The majority of school principals hold a pedagogy degree certification as opposed to graduation in administration or school management one (Fundação Civita, 2009 in Santos, 2017). Although there are post-graduate or online continuous development courses that principals can undertake on administration and school management, it has been found that the majority of principals do not participate in these continuous formation activities (Caed, 2009 in Santos, 2007). This means that there are gaps between the training of school principal and the competencies required to efficaciously manage schools, and also that school principals are not aware of their roles and responsibilities (Mariano et al, 2016).

A third challenge is the fact of being responsible for the achievement of the entire school results, but having been in the position for only 3-6 years (Mariano et al, 2016)²³. In addition, it has been found that in Brasil principals have difficulty in mobilizing staff in order to achieve accountability targets (Abreu, 2013). One of the reasons may be attributed to the fact that they do not have autonomy in contracting teachers (PISA, 2015). The difficulty in managing staff may be also related to the high level of staff absenteeism, high levels of rotation and de-professional status linked to salary and dissatisfaction, which were discussed in the second chapter. A further challenge to accomplishing the required demands may be also represented by reduced financial resources and fiscal structure problems (Duarte et al, 2016).

3.2.4 To conclude: identifying some research gaps

The studies on school leadership in Brazil are mainly focused on the impacts of education policy, such as decentralization school based management, criticizing these government initiatives. In fact, the influence in this area comes from other authors, especially a social critical perspective (Flessa et al, 2017). At the same time, Flessa and colleagues (2017) consider that there has been an increased interest in talking and investigating leadership when associated with improvements in national test results, such as IDEB. Some other studies have been found to be focusing only on the perceived problems principals face.

For what regards leadership frameworks, the majority of the studies focus on administrative roles and describing the job descriptions in schools. In fact, leadership in Brasil is considered as

²² In Brasil any teacher who holds a stable contract, who is working in the school for which she/he candidates him/herself, who holds a any full bachelor certification, and approved in the *exame de Certificação Ocupacional de Dirigente Escolar*, can be nominated and candidate his/herself to be the school principal (Minas Gerais, 2011). The nomination is a direct and political one, indicated by the school collegiality and nominated by the state government (Minas Gerais, 2011).

²³ The maximum mandate is 6 years for principals in public schools in Minas Gerais; with a medium of 3 years (Mariano et al, 2016).

administration and management, in a conservative and technical conception of the school principal's practices as opposed to a pedagogical one (Paro, 2010). Also, instructional leadership in Brasil is mainly conceptualized as a top-down practice and does not include aspects of professional learning development. This is in line with the finding of Flessa and colleagues (2017) on the state of the leadership in Latin America, where studies in Latin America on leadership in general focus more on managerial and management capacities, while overlooking the pedagogical capacities and instructional roles. In addition, studies on leadership in Brazil do not consider other leaders in schools but just the school principal; hence, we could say that is limited in assuming a "distributed" leadership perspective (see Spillane et al, 2004).

Mariano and colleagues (2016), also argue that there is a lack of use of term and studies on leadership and that the international research on the topic has not influenced Brazil. Yet, the existing studies are not looking at leadership practices per se (Mariano et al, 2016). What this highlights is that there is a scarcity of research of the meaning and functions of school principal's leadership, as well as a lack of investigation on the influence of school contexts and contingent factors on leadership practices.

Chapter 4 - Research design and Methodological approach

4.1 Research questions, objectives and hypothesis

The aim of the research is to understand under which conditions and in which sense can principal's leadership act as a mediating variable in the enactment of school autonomy and accountability (SAWA) policies in Brazil.

The research question that has driven my investigation is the following: How SAWA policies are being enacted at the school level, and what is the role of school leaders in mediating SAWA implementation in the situated contexts in which they are embedded?

On the basis of this, the two main objectives of the research are:

- 1) To identify how SAWA policies in Minas Gerais shape principals' practices and leadership styles (through processes of sense-making, meaning-making and decision-taking) in different institutional and socio-economic contexts.
- 2) To analyze the influence of principals and their leadership styles on teacher's reception and implementation of accountability policies, by paying particular attention to the activation of both direct and indirect mechanisms of change²⁴, and taking into account the different institutional and socio-economic contexts in which they are embedded.

The hypothesis which have been formulated are based on the theoretical framework and are the following:

- 1) Principal's leadership in Brazil is shaped by the perceived contrasting pressures, that come from SAWA policies. The accountability dimension of SAWA policies will increase principal's administrative role and managerial leadership practices.
 - However, this depends on the school's socio economic status (SES) and perceived accountability pressures. A higher degree of indirect leadership practices (i.e transformational and distributed style) will emerge in schools with higher SES (due to the cultural and social resources such as higher trust amongst educational personnel and shared school culture) and schools which

²⁴ Based on the literature review, direct mechanisms are considered those related to changes on the school's pedagogical and instructional program, as well as the ones adopted directly on students; while indirect mechanisms of change pass through organizational features and involve aspects of transformational leadership, distributed and democratic leadership (i.e. school climate created, the quality of collegial relationships, distributed leadership, involvement in decision-makings, communication patterns, professional development trust-building patterns etc.).

perceive less pressure to improve, hence adopting less instrumental leadership behaviors. On the contrary, in schools, which perceive more pressure to improve, and in lower SES schools, principals will adopt more direct – i.e instructional and managerial - leadership, in order to target school results and comply with accountability demands.

- 2) In the context of Brazil, teacher's negative reception of SAWA policies are mitigated by the quality of relationships with the principal and other staff members, through processes of collegial trust building, sense of belonging, empowerment, commitment and involvement in decision making, which are more highly enhanced through transformational and distributed leadership styles. However, in socially and economically disadvantaged schools, the role of teacher's working conditions (i.e salary, job security – external material rewards) will play a stronger role than principal's leadership in shaping teacher's reception of the reforms.

4.2 Methodological/theoretical approach

In order to analyze the enactment and implementation of the reforms, the research will be guided by a realist evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 2004), which pays attention to the context, institutional design of the policy programs, as well as to the meaning-making processes of the actors who enact these programs. Realist evaluation is a theory-driven methodology that aims to unpack policies as way to understand their local level enactment and behavioral effects, before assuming they produce specific results.

First of all, a realist evaluation investigation considers that policy programs are embedded in social systems, meaning that they are contained in “the interplays of individual and institution, of agency and structure, and of micro and macro social processes” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997 p. 63). Thus, according to the authors, the way in which policy ideas are delivered depends upon several factors (Pawson and Tilley, 2004), namely:

- Individual capacities of individuals
- Interpersonal relationships
- Institutional factors
- Infrastructural and welfare systems.

In addition, according to this approach, policy programs are active, in the sense that they are produced and require the active engagement of individuals; they are also open systems in the sense that they can be transformed by several externalities; these can change the conditions that have rendered the delivery of the program possible in the first place. Indeed, according to this theory, the effects of a particular policy programs depend on the activation of certain *underlining mechanisms*, defined as the “processes by which the actors interpret and act upon a determinate program” (Pawson and Tilley, 2004:6).

This reminds of the ideas of *policy cycle* and *enactment* developed by Ball and colleagues (see Ball et al, 2012), who argue that implementation of policy texts is not deterministic and that processes

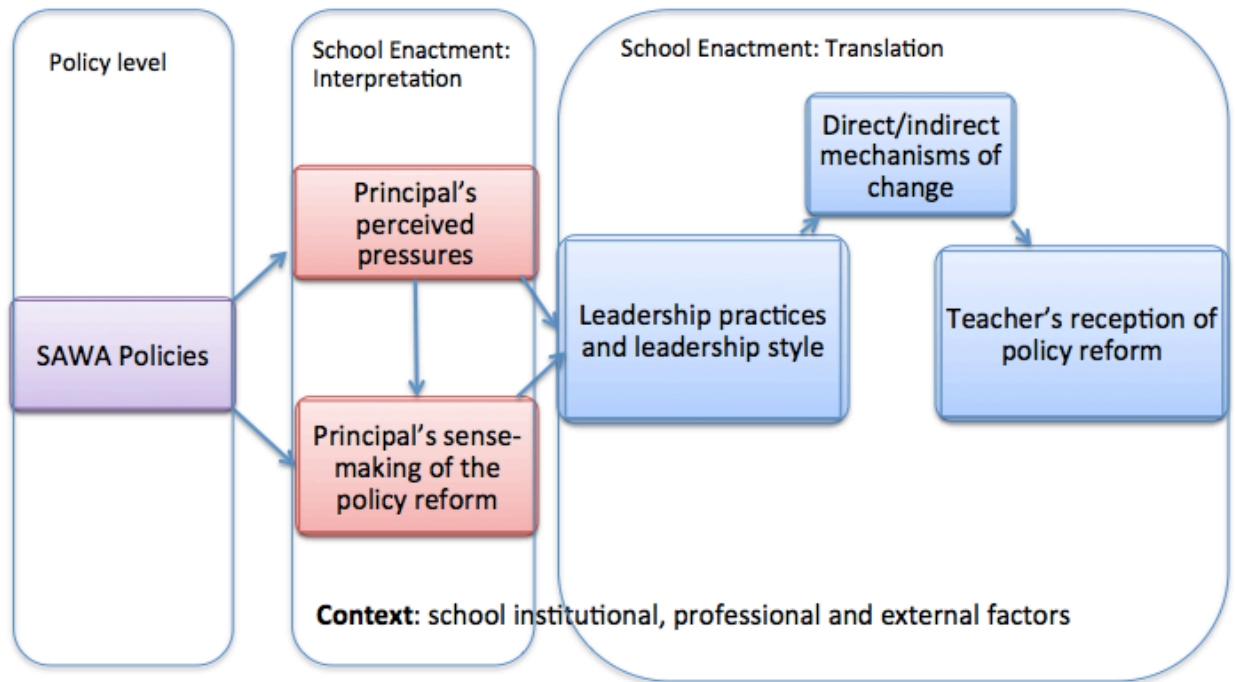
which occur in the school site, mediate their effects. In this sense, the concept of policy enactment is intended as “the ways in which the actors interpret and translate the policy messages” (Ball et al, 2012); policies are therefore understood as an original, creative process that occur within institutions and classrooms and that are subject to interpretation. In this sense, the level of consciousness and agency of individuals is also being considered; in fact, in an interpretative/constructivist framework, I consider actors as active, reflective agents who construct their decision-making on the basis of the meaning given to a particular phenomenon. In this sense, I have been adopting a “cognitive perspective of educational policy implementation” (see Spillane et al, 2002), by considering the different sense making and interpretations that actors may have regarding the policy program. This idea is also relevant since the policy environment I was looking into is a complex one – i.e. a “cluster of policies” (Ball et al, 2012) - as in a combination of different test-based accountability instruments, policies, and pressures.

While looking into school dynamics and organization I also use a constructivist/integrationist approach, where motivation and sense of belonging are seen as deriving from being part of a community and where the role of relationships and shared learning is highly valued. Indeed, looking at the influence of leadership practices and leadership styles on organizational features, the focus is based on the dynamics of the school environment, the relationships and power distribution amongst staff members.

However, according to Pawson and Tilley (1997: 69), “the relationship between causal mechanisms and their effects is not fixed, but contingent”; this means mechanisms will be only activated under particular circumstances, hence in different contexts. Pre-existing structures can in fact both 'enable' or 'disable' the intended mechanism of change, which will render the outcomes mixed and varied (Pawson and Tilley, 2004); at the core of the approach is therefore the idea that policy programs do not work for everyone, but that one should address the issues of 'for whom' and 'in what circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 7). Hence, while looking into the delivery of policy programs, I will also look into the circumstances and contexts, which render these processes mechanisms possible. In other words, I will consider both agentic responses and contextual influences in the enactment of accountability policies.

On the basis of this, the following conceptual/analytical framework has been developed:

Figure 3: Conceptual/analytical framework



Source: own elaboration

4.3 Research Instruments

First of all, it is important to mention that in being part of a broader research project (i.e Reformed), the research design and the school sampling strategy of my research have been framed and supported within the context of my collaboration in the project.

In terms of research instruments, I have used a qualitative research design (Merriam, 2009), conducting semi-structured interviews and participatory observations at the school level, in four different public schools.

This choice enables to capture contextualizing data as well as individual perceptions and micro dynamics within schools. In fact, qualitative semi-structured interviews are useful to capture participant's perspectives, thus understanding how the implementation of the policies is mediated by subjective variables and personal experiences of teachers and principals. Merriam (2009) describes this process as being "inductive, that is, researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories". In addition, a qualitative research approach provides with greater flexibility; indeed, changes can be made based on a researcher's findings (Merriam, 2009). This was the case for my research, as I adapted the interview script based on common themes, which emerged from participant's responses. On another hand, personal engagement and participatory observations in school and classroom contexts, helps qualitatively and more closely capture the individual meanings of those discourses and practices, by relating them to the specific school climate and environment in which they are embedded. In this sense, informal observations are used to put interview's responses into perspective. The direct observation of school sites, spaces

and infrastructural aspects, also help answer the “conditions under which” the accountability policies are implemented.

Contextual school data has also been retrieved from secondary sources of national databases. This includes information of test results (Prova Brasil) and socio-economic school level (INSE - Indicador de Nível Socioeconômico) from Censo Escolar (2015) in INEP database; These variables have been purposely integrated and used in the selection of schools, as will be described further on.

4.4 Selection of schools and sampling strategy

The enactment of accountability policies has been studied at primary level in four different public schools in the city of Belo Horizonte (in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil). The focus on Minas Gerais state is based on the existence and nature of test-based accountability policies, which carry pedagogical and financial consequences and their acknowledgement by international institutions. The decision of looking into schools which are placed in the urban zone of Belo Horizonte (and not rural areas) is justified by the fact that many consequences of accountability policies are related to their location in different “local education markets”, which are more present in urban areas²⁵.

The selection of schools has been based on the 2015 Census (INEP database), which contains information on federal external test results (Prova Brasil) and rankings (IDEB) as well as socio-economic level of schools (INSE). This is because the perception of accountability pressures requires the participation in external tests, such as Prova Brasil (and P. Brasil, as well as its introduction within the IDEB index, is one of the main accountability tools in the country).

I have considered schools which offer both ISCED 1 (elementary education) and ISCED 2 (lower secondary) levels of education (cf. annex table 1); indeed, since P. Brasil is conducted at the end of primary and lower secondary education (grades 5 and 9 respectively), schools participating in P. Brasil necessarily offer primary education (anos iniciais, ISCED 1, and/or anos finais, ISCED 2). Furthermore, I have included only publicly run schools, including public-State and public-municipal schools. In this sense, private schools were excluded from the final sample. This is because: first, Prova Brasil is not compulsory for private schools, therefore the ones participating may have biased, presenting unobservable characteristics; second, in the database, there are no private schools participating in Prova Brasil in Minas Gerais; and finally, due to the difference between public and private schools in Brasil in terms of numbers of pupils enrolled²⁶ and in terms of socio-economic status²⁷, which results in diverse and incomparable environments.

The universe of school that coincides with these selection criteria, corresponds to 68 schools in the city of Belo Horizonte. Amongst these, more than half (59%) are municipal schools and the rest

²⁵ This is according to the OECD’s definition of urbanity: municipalities with more than 150 inhabitants per km² (OECD, 2011).

²⁶ In Brazil, public schools enroll the majority of pupils, also at *ensino fundamental*: in this sense, the public sector enroll the majority of students: 71% in early childhood, 86% in primary education, 87% in secondary education (UNESCO, 2015).

²⁷ In Brasil, students in private schools tend to be much more richer than the ones enrolled in the public sector (e.g OECD, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). This is also true in urban areas of Minas Gerais: according to IDEB database, in the urban areas of Minas Gerais, private schools are much richer (average INSE of 61.9), compared to public schools, both municipal (average INSE 52.6) and State (average INSE 51.8).

(41%) are state schools (as seen table 2 here below). Indeed, being Brazil a highly decentralized country, it is important to look at the differences between administrative levels in terms of socio-economic background and academic results. According to this, in Belo Horizonte there is no socio-economic difference (i.e INSE) among public-State and public-Municipal schools²⁸, while state schools have in general, higher academic outcomes (i.e Prova Brasil) than municipal schools, as can be seen in the table here below.

Table 2: Description of the sample: Socio-economic level, academic outcomes and rankings according to provision of schools

	Frequency	Percentage	INSE average	PB Average	IDEB average
State public schools	28	41,2	53,9381	231,02	5,73
Municipal public schools	40	58,8	53,1327	225,66	5,30
Total public schools Belo Horizonte	68	100,0	53,1455	226,23	5,3

Source: own elaboration based on Censo Escolar (2015)

Stratifying variables

In order to select four schools out of this universe, the explicit chosen stratifying variables were schools' socio-economic background (i.e., INSE), and academic results (i.e., Prova Brasil). The selection of schools' socio-economic background and not schools' provision is due to several reasons: According to the analysis performed based on Census (2015) data, (1) in terms of academic outcomes, urban schools in Minas Gerais are more differentiated according to their socio-economic background than according to their (municipal, State) provision (2) In urban public schools of Minas Gerais, academic results (including both Prova Brasil, as well as IDEB) are more explained by socio-economic variables (i.e., INSE) than by provision (public-State and public-municipal)²⁹. On the other hand, the selection of Prova Brasil as stratifying variable instead of, for instance, IDEB rankings, was due to the fact that Prova Brasil results were more frequent in the database and, also because IDEB includes also repetition and drop-out rates, which are also proxies of schools' culture; in comparison, Prova Brasil is based only on an external test, thus may be considered more standardized and objective.

²⁸ NOTE: this is very different to what happens into other regions, or to what happen in other (rural, urban) areas of Minas Gerais.

²⁹ When analyzing the correlation between variables, socio-economic background is more correlated to academic results (compared to provision). Based on a chi-square test for independence of variables, schools' socio-economic background has a statistical significant correlation with both Prova Brasil and IDEB; in contrast, provision has only statistical significant correlation with IDEB (analysis based on INEP, 2015).

School Typology and description of final sample

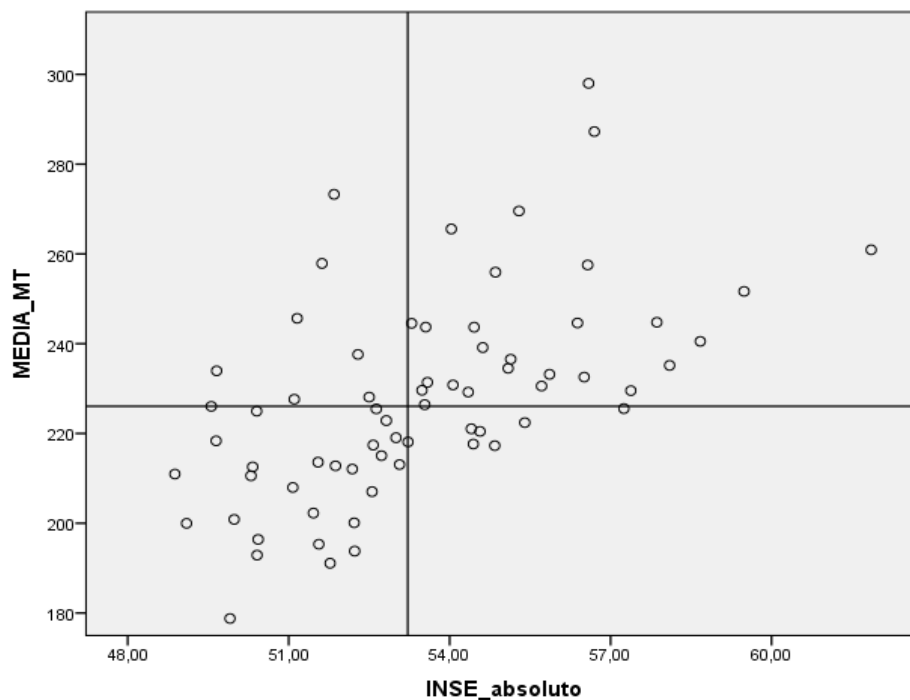
The final discriminatory variables for the explicit sampling were: academic results (i.e., Prova Brasil) and socio-economic status (i.e., INSE). These were divided in two categories each one (high and low, which means above and below the average). Hence, the two stratifying variables generated a typology that comprises four ideal types of schools: poor schools well-performing, poor schools under-performing, rich schools well-performing, and rich schools under-performing. Based on that, schools were classified in the following way: 7 poor schools well-performing, 25 poor schools under-performing, 29 rich schools well-performing, and 7 rich schools under-performing (as seen in Table 3). In addition, the following figure (figure 4) shows the distribution of 68 schools of the sample: the 29 rich well-performing schools are placed on the right part top of the graph; the 25 poor under-performing schools are placed on the left bottom part of the graph; and so on.

Table 3: Typology of schools (urban public schools in Minas Gerais), based on INSE and P. Brasil median

	<i>Low Prova Brasil</i>	<i>High Prova Brasil</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>High INSE</i>	7	29	36
<i>Low INSE</i>	25	7	32
<i>Total</i>	32	36	68

Source: own elaboration based on IDEB (2015) database.

Figure 4: Urban public schools in Minas Gerais, with INSE and P. Brasil average



Source: own elaboration based on IDEB (2015) database.

Because of the requirements of the fieldwork, which required n=4 schools, I have selected one school per category. Considering all schools belonging to each of the four typologies the same amongst them, I have selected these based on proximity criteria. Indeed, because of the time limit of my framework, being Belo Horizonte a large administrative geographical area, distance and time in commuting were considered. The four final schools will be referred to as school A, B, C and D, each of them belonging to one different category. Each school is distinctive in various ways, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 4: Overview of participating schools

School	School Size	Position in rankings	Student level	SES	Administrative dependency
School A	21 classes (approx. 550 students)	Below-average	Above-average		Municipal school
School B	32 classes (approx. 960 students)	Above-average	Above-average		State school
School C	18 classes (approx. 360 students)	Below-average	Below-average		Municipal School
School D	20 classes (Approx. 450 students)	Above-average	Below-average		State school

4.5 Case/population

The unit of observation/analysis are school principals; members of school management team; and teachers. Components of the school leadership team (i.e vice-principals and educational coordinators/specialists) were included considering a distributed leadership perspective (Spillane et al, 2004); indeed, school principals may not be the only leaders in the school, and it is important to consider also informal leaders, by looking into how leadership tasks and power is shared amongst them.

In order to select teachers in each school, I have considered at least two teachers who were teaching in a class, which was being evaluated (grades 5 and/or 9), and at least two, which were not (all other grades). This is because practices, responses and subjective perceptions of accountability policies may differ in experiencing or not accountability pressures.

The final sample included the school principal of each school; the whole school leadership/management team (which varied from 2-4 according to the school); and at least 4 teachers per school.

4.6 Data collection process

The fieldwork has been carried out in three months, from September to December 2017.

School access took place during a specific week, which was third week of October: this was strategically chosen because both federal (Prova Brasil) and national (SIMAVE) were expected to take place during the following weeks, according to the school calendars. Access happened mainly through principals or pedagogical coordinators, who would have continued to be my point of reference and communication throughout all the fieldwork.

Visits to each school were carried at least once per week, in order to get a deeper and continuous understanding of the dynamics and school culture of each institutional setting.

Establishing rapport was informal and easy, schools were receptive about the possibility of following and accompanying their work; in fact, I was considered as an “intern”, which enabled me to feel part of the school culture and participate in all of the school’s internal activities and meetings. Indeed, amongst other things, I supervised and applied external evaluations, participated in teacher’s internal evaluations, final term school councils, as well as invited to cultural events and celebrations. My positionality and participatory approach has hence greatly enabled to gain a deep insight of the internal dynamics and build trusting relationships with participants.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with all key personnel in schools. The total number of interviewed has been 32, including external test supervisors present in schools at the moment of the test examinations. These were not included in my initial sample, but I seized the opportunity to interview, in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the whole accountability system.

Interview scripts were designed based on the literature review and conceptual framework and included thematic aspects such as: work and tasks, roles, the perception of accountability pressures and, the use of data coming from external tests, perception of school climate and principal’s leadership style, amongst other items (see annex table 4 for interview guidelines). Two main guidelines had therefore been developed, one for teachers and one for school principals and management team. However, while conducting interviews, I adapted and contextualized the questions based on contingent school factors and characteristics, which also emerged during the observations. Also, after some time spent in schools, I had gained a better understanding of the language and terminology used, which helped frame questions in a more familiar and less technical way. In addition, I prioritized and reviewed the order of the themes according to the personality or position of the person I was interviewing; in this sense, it was important to prioritize and strategize points according to the person’s position in school and/or knowledge about SAWA system. This led to the identification of 5 main topics/themes within the interview guide that would have been explored in a non-fixed order. I also made use of an open-ended (Patton, 1990) and responsive more than directive approach. This has enabled to better capture narratives, feelings, subjective perceptions and rationales.

In terms of methodology, each participant was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and interviews were conducted in schools, held at times and place selected by the participants; at times, lunch was scheduled in order to engage in more informal conversations. All interviews were tape-recorded, prior to verbal consent. Additionally, notes were sometimes taken during the interviews.

Participatory observations in schools were informal and unstructured and included attending to school internal meetings, classroom instructions and other extra curricular activities and events. Specifically I attended and took part in:

- School councils;
- Classroom instructions;
- Extra-curricular activities and festivities (i.e Fiera Cultural, tournaments);
- School internal meetings and breaks;
- Student final evaluations and reporting;

- School external evaluations and supervision;
- Teacher evaluation internal meetings.

Observation notes were taken on paper and recorded on cell phone; a daily journal was also used to depict observations made during each school visit and to verify data. During the last month, I conducted several more observations and interviews after data saturation, to confirm/give relevance to preliminary findings and ensure no more themes emerged.

4.7 Tools for data analysis

In order to analyze data, I have used a qualitative realist analysis logic (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; 2004), according to which 'regularities', 'rates', 'associations', 'outcomes', 'patterns' are generated by underlining mechanisms, based on the interplay between structure and agency, and also only fired in particular local, historical or institutional contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 71). In this sense, the analytical framework and analysis is based on the interplay and combination of realist evaluation components in terms of context (C), mechanisms (M) and outcomes (O) (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Figure 5: Realist generative explanation of outcomes

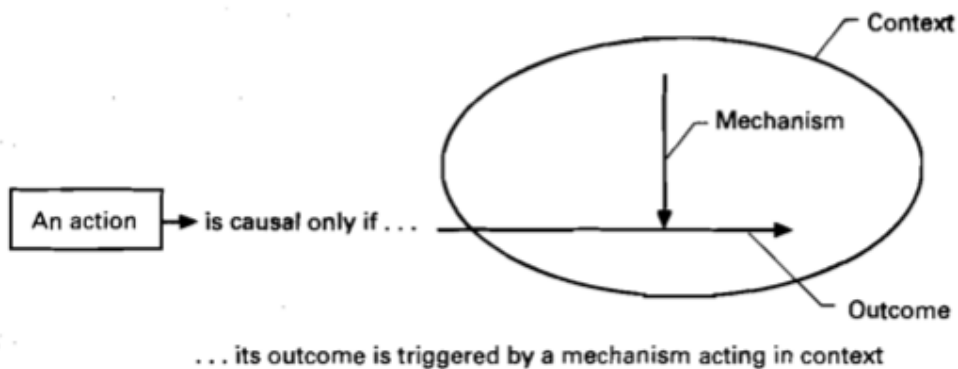


Figure 3.1 *Generative causation*

Source: Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 58

A list of thematic codes (see annex table 5 for coding list) has been accordingly developed and a coding strategy adopted based on my conceptual/analytical framework.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines set by the Autonomous University of Barcelona regarding research practices, data collection and dissemination have been strictly followed. Indeed, I have consistently gone through the code of Good Practice in research (2013), and made sure to consistently apply the ethical guidelines throughout all of the research process.

In terms of access, in addition to verbal explanation of my research project, a formal letter of justification of the purpose, aim and methodology of my research, duly signed by university and thesis supervisor, was also provided. In addition, whenever required, I have also provided schools with additional formal documentations, and had to explicit all of the research tools; this included sharing the entire research project, providing letters of collaboration with the university research partner (UFMG), as well as sharing interview items.

Furthermore, in conducting interviews, continuous voice consent has been asked throughout the whole fieldwork, and anonymity is guaranteed.

In terms of approach and methodology, a participatory ethnographic research process, with active participation and exchange through the establishment of rapport and trustful relationship between researcher and research has been adopted all throughout the data collection process. In addition, the decision of visiting schools on a weekly basis and spending the whole day, sharing and respecting the participant's working space enabled to be fully involved, going further and deeply capturing the significance of meaning and processes. This was also considered a culturally sensitive strategy, in a context where proactivity is required, and participation in informal events appreciated. Indeed, participating in extra-curricular events and activities I was invited to was seen as an ethical way to feel part of the school institutions and gain a cultural deeper understanding from the inside.

The establishment of solid rapports with participants was seen as an ethical and equalitarian way of positioning myself within the field. Indeed, my position as an international student and researcher has been critically considered and taken into account all throughout the research phase. Whether I was seen as considered part of the local university, or as part of an international research project, or simply as an Italian citizen, has in many cases differently shaped the perception, the intention and thus the responses participants gave. However, by sharing also informal moments and through the development of trusting and informal relationships, also outside the school context, I was able to engage in more truthful, natural and comfortable spaces for dialogue. In this sense, although I was guided and followed the interview scripts, conversations were structured in an informal and the most participatory, open and responsive manner, also to give space for reflexive judgments and other themes to emerge. This was fundamental especially considering some of particularly challenging and socially economic disadvantaged contexts I was involved in.

In this sense, the need of adapting myself to the different contexts I was embedded in was also considered fundamental, as well as according to the position in school and personality of the different participants. This required me to learn how to use different ways of presenting myself, different ways of framing the research project and interview questions as well as adopting different interactive approaches.

Furthermore, a continuous reading and confrontation with literature was adopted to avoid reiteration. In this sense, being part of a collaborative research project and process has greatly enabled to confront reiterative assumptions.

At last, an ethical exit, return and closure has been established, through the compromise of return, a last visit, personalized present and “thank you” note to each of the schools and interviewed participants, as well as a continuous and ongoing contact until now.

4.9 Limitations

First of all, the objective of looking into a whole set of policy instruments and programs, which are part of the test-based accountability system in Minas Gerais, has enriched the complexity of the research focus and analysis.

In the second place, casual relationships between the implementation of standardized tests and school practices would need a longitudinal analysis that is beyond the scope of my research. Furthermore, since the tests have been implemented in a specific time (Prova Brasil since 2005 and SIMAVE since 2000), it is difficult to attribute observed practices to standardize tests. This however, could be overcome by triangulating observations with questions in interviews regarding perceptions and values of standardize tests.

Regarding interviews, participants had limited time available, which made it difficult to cover all items in the interview guideline. In addition, the initial use of sophisticated academic and technical language, sometimes rendered questions and concepts difficult to address; also, the use of my non-native language also represents a limitation, in the sense of being often misunderstood and sometimes, limiting the ability to engage in further follow-ups and discussions.

Finally, limitations are present in the sampling strategy and school selection: since majority of schools were part of two of the categories (rich high performing; and poor low-performing), to have a balanced sample, I should have doubled the number of schools in these two categories, which was however impossible due to constrained time and resources available. Also, dividing the variables in two categories is useful in for typology and analytical purposes, but does not enable to problematize and capture the variety amongst the categories (i.e in the same category, some schools could have had very low performance, while others a performance which was closer to the average).

Chapter 5 - Analysis and Findings

5.1 Perceptions and sense-makings

School leader's perception of their own role/responsibilities

In a context of changing educational reforms, school principals dealt and felt responsible for multiple roles and functions (from administrative, human resources and pedagogical areas). However, they perceived the administrative, managerial and financial aspects to be the ones, which required more attention (in detriment of pedagogical functions), but also the ones with which they struggled the most.

I have a financial autonomy which comes from the municipal government... the PDDE is a federal program of money directly in schools, where I have the basic amount that I can spend which I can use immediately... so I have to reunite the school collegiality, I have to explain the necessities there are, I show them the school budget, keep tracking of the spending... I have the *caixa escolar*, which is all a complex financial and administrative organization of school... it is like a third sector entity, and I find this a strange thing to deal with... And at the same time we need to manage the pedagogical aspect [...] but the administrative and financial part is much more complicated, because it takes time, it requires a lot of things to do... Accompanying, soliciting the public tender, following the laws and legislations, taking three budgets, looking into the market, products, so it takes a lot of time... and we don't even have training for it (principal, school C).

On the one hand, this difficulty is related to the contextual and economic conditions of the country and characteristic of each administrative unit, in terms of number of staff and human resources present in schools. This influenced the perception of school principals, who felt they needed to deal with everything by themselves, as emerged by the following participants' words:

What is my function? My function is everything! Because here in Minas Gerais everything is peculiar, every case, every school... there are some in which there is no vice-principal, some schools which do not have pedagogical supervision or coordinators... And there are schools, which only have one principal by itself who needs to do everything by itself ... follow pedagogical matters, as well as the financial part, which is the most difficult part! The one, which requires more time... because in the past schools had a sort of accouter ("contador"), who helped the principal, but last year they removed this....and also now there is only one other administrative secretary in the area of human resources, who deals with payments, and who deals with staff's concerns (Principal, school D).

...The financial manager we have here helps a lot, she takes the majority of the work. Now they want to take this figure out and I don't know how it will be... everything will be on principal's responsibility.. contracting, making public tenders, budget everything. Before it was better.. and this change will give more work, and the pedagogical part will suffer and be prejudiced. Because there will be no time in handling everything (Principal, school A).

In another way, this difficulty in complying with financial and managerial tasks can also be related to the lack of training received prior becoming a principal, as discussed in Chapter 3 (section 2.3). Indeed, the issue about the required leadership capacities emerged regularly in the interviews and school leaders felt that they were lacking the adequate skills, especially when dealing with managerial and financial aspects. In fact, as discussed in chapter 4, this is related to the principal's selection processes, which is only based on public teaching status and an examination (Minas Gerais, 2011).

In state schools, the entrance of a teacher to be a principal is lets say, a failing process. Because there is an examination, where you need to study everything in relation to the school, and just from there you start assuming the school leadership function. I have had the advantage to have an experience as a school vice-principal during four years, so this helped assuming the role of a principal. In fact, it is not a priority of the state to have a post graduation in management. So in general school leaders in state schools don't have training in managerial area (Principal, school D).

I am not trained in finances, I am trained in history, I have no clue about finances! This is boring! We need to learn in practice, how to apply for public tenders, public tenders for food, and all a series of problems that we need to solve... (Principal, school D).

Participants (both teachers and part of leadership team) hence agreed on the necessity of a more adequate preparation for school principals especially in the administrative and managerial areas. In addition, lack of adequate training influenced the perception of their own self-efficacy, in terms of capacity to meet the expectations and demands they needed to face (Tscannen Moran and Gerais, 2004). In fact, professional background and training had an influence on principal's perception of their own role. For instance, those principals who did not have a background in administrative or managerial areas found it more difficult to comply with such demands; on the contrary, one who held a post-degree in "administration and school management", affirmed this was one of the areas she enjoyed most working in.

What emerges is that in general, school leaders felt that they were legally asked to be more invested in administrative, financial and managerial tasks, but without the necessary conditions to do so; the pedagogical responsibility, on the other hand was acknowledged to be attributed to pedagogical coordinators, in alignment with their legislative roles and responsibilities. We can hence identify a "distributed leadership", at least in its formal structure (Spillane et al, 2004).

What do I do here? It's general, you know... the *Caixa escolar*, managing school personnel, the cleaning and dining personnel... all of this (principal, school A).

Pedagogical coordinators have their own time to meet professors, and there they look into issues of planning, issues in classes, with each one... Sometimes if there is something to change, we talk about it together.. they are more close with teachers and are those who deal more these aspects, but we are always together. (Vice-principal, school A).

Leadership means you divide the activities. So I have a responsible person for the financial part, I have a secretary... two vice-principals, one for the morning and one for the afternoon.. so it is quite a shared work, you understand? (Principal, school A).

On a normative level, however, participants identified that their human/pedagogical leadership role was equally important and necessary. This created a tension between the idea they had of being a

“pedagogical leader” with that of having to comply with the role of “manager” of the school. Indeed, there was a conflict between the expectations regarding their role, the idea and value of leadership they had, and the external tasks, which they needed to comply on a daily basis. This is relevant to consider since, when the required capacities matched their expectations, school principals also felt more satisfied with their job. On the other hand, those who’s expectation of being a principal meant leading pedagogical matters and peoples, were also more frustrated with their position, and felt that dealing with government demands, administrative tasks and responding to bureaucratic functions, took time out of their “real” job.

My expectation of being a principal was to lead a group with which I had a high affinity with... it was a long time I worked in this school, I had worked in leadership domains and couldn't wait to be in the school directorate and to lead this group... I passed the selection process, but from being in a team, which had chosen and selected you to one of the government, I thought... “no, this is not what I want”. [...] I think there was a time where being a school principal brought glamour, a power with it as well... I don't know if it had to do with the time of the dictatorship in Brazil, the fact of being the boss and representing the government, then the idea changed, and the principal is today considered the leader of a group. At least, this is what it should be, selected by that group, but in the end he ends up assuming the leadership of the government [...] You start getting involved in so many bureaucratic things, in so much paperwork. Which needs to be clean and perfect, that the pedagogical part is left out (professor, former principal, school D).

In addition, all participants agreed that leadership required major capacities and was the position that carried the major responsibilities; indeed, they felt that they needed to comply with several different demands and domains at a time, in a work overload, which influenced their perception of increased responsibility.

It is the role with major responsibilities in school, because all, which happens, positive or negative it is the school principal's responsibility (principal, school B).

I think that being a teacher is better, because you enter in your class and do your job, with your students and leave. In the school leadership, we need to solve many things. All problems, professors, students, parents... It is much more complicated... more work, more preoccupations, and more responsibilities, as well (vice-principal, school B).

You need to deal with all of these responsibilities... pedagogical, organizational, and there are pedagogical coordinators who deal directly with teachers and students, but logically always with the school principal's help... He needs to help as well, showing himself, because this figure is important for everyone, because or else he would only be an administrative secretary... the school principal is also a leadership figure... that aspect of being together, showing himself, have an attitude, being in service.. and needs to deal with the accouter, he needs to sign many things.. he needs to write, make the public tender, but also lead the organizational space.. taking care of students, indicating, listening.. it is a work which is full of responsibility, of many things to do (vice-principal, school C).

Understanding, value of test-based accountability and perceived pressures

In a context of accountability policies, all school principals perceived their schools were held accountable and also identified different types of accountability pressures. Unsurprisingly, and in agreement with the literature (e.g Ford, 2016; Shipps and White, 2009), they had different views regarding the accountability faced, and understood the test-based accountability in different ways: as a way to being transparent and accountable to society (i.e decentralization accountability), as a positive tool to improve school's instructional planning through school reviews and testing (i.e

management accountability), as a form of systemic alignment (i.e administrative/bureaucratic), as a way for parents to choose children's school (i.e market accountability) or as a form of educational quality assurance (i.e performance based). This does not surprise, since, as seen, the concept and type of accountability can be very differently defined.

The interpretation principals had regarding the type of accountability influenced the perceived accountability pressures as well as the value given to the external test. Those principals who associated test-based accountability with transparent democratic mechanisms towards society (i.e decentralization type of accountability), as generating strategic planning and improvement processes (i.e managerial accountability) or as a need to standardize and align education (i.e bureaucratic/administrative) also held a positive consideration about the test and perceived less pressure deriving from it.

I think that the external test comes in this sense... in the sense of transparency. Because in public state policy, we need to show society, we need to be accountable to society... and Prova Brasil is a test, which I think is excellent in the moment it is made public, and everyone can read school's results... I do a lot of different things, which is part of the school, but it this is not shown externally... while Prova Brasil indicates if all school's action is channeled towards student's learning (principal, school C).

However, market and performance-based accountabilities also generated higher pressure on principals, which translated into a negative view regarding the test and its generated mechanisms and consequences. Indeed, the principals who associated the publication of test results with parental choice, funding and market-based principles held a negative view regarding the test as an accountability tool.

The external test is today... it is important they perform well. I believe that nowadays for parents to choose their school, they have access to these grades. So if the school has good results, I will place them in that. What I talked about "marketing", marketing should be positive. I always call community, I show them I am doing good for school, in order for parents not to take their children out, because this would decrease classes, decrease number of students and professors... because the more professors, more work there is, you have to understand this, so we could form another class and work in it (principal, school D).

In the same school, the acknowledgement of the test's consequences, also had repercussions on the sense of self-responsibility, in what Ball (2003) describes as a "terror of performativity":

If the result is bad, who is seen responsible is *me!* They do not want to know if it was a supervisor's fault, a professor or student... if the result is negative, who is accountable is me [...] they send an intervention to see why the school is not teaching the student. But learning is a result of a lot of factors, logical that it is also the structure, professors, students, family... a lot of things together... but still they send a notification, an intervention, they want to know why is it that school is not teaching. I need to give justification. And it seems like as *I* am the one who is not teaching students. They think I am not making school accountable for the results. But we all do we can, you know? (Principal, school D).

Furthermore, this difference in perceived pressures and understandings, can be justified and supported by several factors: first, their view about education; principals who had a positive consideration about the test as a valid, reliable and trustful instrument, also shared an instrumental

and positional value of education (Mc Cowan, 2010), justified by the need to access opportunities and compete in a capitalist global world. In fact, often participants validated external tests for the fact that their design and targets are aligned to external and objective international standards.

Secondly, their knowledge about the test's design and purposes; having a good understanding of what the test evaluates and identifying its purpose as being diagnostic and evaluative, as opposed to punitive, means they also acknowledged that it represented a way to evaluate an aspect of the quality offered by their school, and hence relied and used its data to monitor school's progress and generate improved strategies.

In the beginning no one understood their objective very well, today we receive these evaluations well. Because it's a way to look into schools work and see where you need to invest more (vice-principal, school A).

The test evaluates learning in Portuguese and mathematics, and this is a valuable indicator for which school can orientate itself and look for its "north" (principal, school A).

It is interesting to highlight how a positive consideration about the test and the type of accountability faced, was present in both low - performing schools studies; which is the contrary to what we would expect from the literature (e.g. Ford, 2016; Shirrell, 2016), where school principals in low performing schools face higher pressures and hold negative views regarding the accountability reform.

At this point, it is however important to problematize two aspects:

First, the relative concept of being "low-performing" schools; in fact school principals working in schools that I have categorized as "low-performing", actually perceived themselves to be performing well, in relation to their past performance or in relation to other schools in the whole country. Hence, the fact that targets are set according to school's own characteristics (inep.gov.br) may have also influenced the lesser-perceived pressure by principals.

Our result of 5th year, we increased from 3.4 to 4.9... I think we will reach 5.5 or 6, I am already seeing this. In the 9th year, since in 205 the result was very low I think that this year we will reach the target that the educational ministry has set for us... our target for 5th grade in 2001 is 4.1 and in 209 we already had 4.9 (Principal, school C).

Secondly, the fact that the two low-performing schools I was looking into, were also municipal schools: school's administrative dependency is a relevant aspect to consider in Brazil, since from my analysis, it also emerged that in the two municipal schools, school leaders perceived larger support coming from the municipal administration and had a closer dialogue with government structures. This may be related to the fact that in Belo Horizonte the state education secretary has a larger number of schools under its responsibility (Census, 2015), which renders a closer relationship, dialogue and monitoring more difficult.

We organized ourselves and dialogued with the regional secretary... I never had any problem with them, I go there and tell them " the reading we did of our school is this, what we should improve is this.." we have this dialogue, yes. I do nothing here which is hidden.. they listen to me, and we have this good relationship (Principal, school C).

In addition, also the knowledge about the test instrument and mechanisms varied. Those principals working in municipal schools were more informed and knowledgeable about the test's composition, consequences and more conscious of their school's result evolution. This is important, considering that "if the purposes, intentions, roles and expectations are clearly understood from the outset the chances for successful accountability systems are enhanced" (Normore, 2004: 58).

Because IDEB evaluates quality, equity and school flux.. quality is the average score of the student, equity is the difference between performance levels.. so if you have a large difference you have low equity [...] so what I do is multiply this for the flux, which goes from 0 to 1. I arrived and it was 0.70, today it is at 0.9. which means it is improving. My goal is to reach 1 (principal, school C).

This also reflected in a higher trustworthiness towards government's programs and administrations in municipal schools. Therefore, if external tests are part of government programs, a close relationship with government structures, may influence the degree of acceptance or resistance that principals have regarding the test-based accountability. In fact, those principals who had a good and close relationship with government structures, did not feel so much pressure for test-based accountability policies, also had a positive consideration about the test, and considered it as a useful diagnostic instrument to evaluate and monitor student's achievement. Principals working in state schools, on the other hand, either recognized the fact that external test results were only partial measures of school's quality; either had a resistant and negative attitude towards them because of their perceived pressure. Principal's level of involvement and dialogue with higher instances may therefore have had a role in influencing their understanding and perception of accountability policies. Hence, the fact of working in municipal schools, where they perceived support and had a good relationship with higher lines, may have mitigated the pressure of accountability policies perceived on them, through the understanding and value regarding the test-based accountability.

5.2 Practices adopted by school principals to align with accountability demands, and underlining motives/supporting factors

Practices adopted by principals in response to accountability pressures varied across the different schools. Practices adoption, was shaped by the understanding and perception principals had of the accountability pressures as well as the contextual and school environmental conditions in which they were embedded. On the contrary of what the literature states, what emerged is that principals did not clearly adopt direct or indirect mechanisms of change, but adopted a combination of both, often prioritizing one over the other.

School D: poor and high-performing state school

School D is a small-sized state school located in a middle-upper class neighborhood. Here, the principal perceived higher pressure from external accountability policies and held negative views regarding the test-based accountability. Compliance was achieved through the adoption of what he

considered to be “marketing” activities, such as direct and constant contact with higher instances and by showing a positive image of the school.

I send e-mails to the secretary of education, pictures through whatsapp.. I communicate on results of school, I do a positive propaganda, I have a constant and good contact with them, during science exhibition, I take pictures, send them, I show them that school is working well (principal, school D).

In addition, according to teachers’ words, the principal adopted direct forms of control on them in order to comply with government objectives, such as transmitting pressure and sense of responsibility.

The principal suffers this direct pressure from the secretary of education and transmits it to us, you know... what the objective of the secretary is... what they want and do not want... (Teacher grade 9, school D).

What emerges from this last quote is the existence of vertical and hierarchical form of accountability pressure that influenced principal’s use of internal accountability to align to external mandates. The adoption of this practice may be supported by the difficulty the principal had in aligning teacher’s accountability to the external accountability pressures, specifically in supporting teacher’s commitment to change (Leithwood, 2001). In fact, in contexts of high pressures, school leaders may “face a particular tension between the demands of accountability and the demand to build commitment among their teachers” (Shirrell, 2016: 560).

Interestingly, this was also supported by the idea the principal had of professionals as de-motivated and unwilling to change and to adapt to changes, in a form of performative idea of the teaching profession (Ball, 2005), as well a lack of trust in teachers in responding effectively to his directions. In fact, when complying with accountability pressures, principals experience conflict between exerting forms of control over teachers while at the same time building trust, commitment and collegiality (Shirrell, 2016). Furthermore, the perception of his leadership positional role, and a gendered idea of the teaching profession, dominated by traditional, irrational notions of the female identity (Dillabough, 1999), translated to even major difficulty to making teachers comply with the policy messages.

The vice-principal (a women) has constant meetings with them... but I am a man and don’t have as much patience, you have to do what you have to do. And I leave this part to her. Because they are women and, especially in the afternoon they are all women and they are more sensitive, you know? In school there are only 10 men out of 80 people working in here, and I find it easier working with men... because I am the boss, and anything I say they get offended, they don’t accept it, they don’t understand. I have a problem with this, they cry when I call them to solve a problem, some cry a lot, they think school is wrong. I hold them accountable because for instance they can go on a strike, its their right, but you have to come and give classes... so I talk to them and they don’t take it well, they see is as “authoritarian”.

Finally, although not explicitly reported by the principal, according to a teacher, the principal also adopted opportunistic behaviors, such as cheating and incentivizing teachers to help students in the day of the examination. The triggering of these opportunistic cheating behaviors may hence have had a role in increasing student’s performance considering their low-socio economic status.

That's why I think that such an external assessment they get to a point where they are made-up [...] I already applied the evaluation, the same that was applied here yesterday... And the principal told me like, "give... give a little help"... like to make it up, you know? "If you look at the answer, and see that the student is mistaken, look at what he is mistaking and... "read it again... see if it is this one" almost giving an answer, you know? I think that this is the making up that they show in the end (prof. 5th year, school D).

School C: Poor low-achieving municipal school

School C is a poor and low-achieving municipal school, located in one of the most vulnerable historically informal areas of the city. In this environment, the school principal mainly used direct instructional practices to comply with the accountability demands.

He focused on the development of an instructional strategy, through a consistent pedagogical project (PPP), based on a detailed identification and analysis of school's and student's main problems and priorities. These included focusing on student's discipline and increasing their educational attendance, while at the same time also maintaining an organized and disciplined school environment. In order to meet these goals and improve student's performance, he adopted what was perceived to be an "effective traditional and conservative pedagogy" as opposed to a progressive child-centered invisible one (see Berstein, 2003).

What I think is missing is a strategic vision... our indicators are improving, but it's a constant and slow improvement [...] so what I look into is for example the use of text books, I have a work which is only based on text books... when I arrived here it was such a confusion! So I started seeing, what is the problem with it? Students arrived, they took the book with them, the teacher started explaining and they were drawing on it and having fun [...] so we did a whole policy of text books, explaining it to teachers, with a lot of rules, and by then students started bringing it to school.. we organized the timetable to facilitate students bringing it with them [...] today only few don't, but majority they bring it in [...] so I took back much of the conventional model of schooling, abandoning the Escola Plural model, because I don't know in other contexts but in this school students need it, it is a socio-cultural problem of the family, so students need to know how to study by themselves... so we slowly gave them things to do at home, for them to responsabilize themselves at home [...] maybe this is thought to be very conventional and traditional but I think its what worked here and what made the school improve (principal, school C).

According to the principal, this type of pedagogy aimed at increasing student's performance, through individualized learning, the use of text-books and the development of an educational culture of their own. In alignment with what Berstein (2003) argues, pedagogical forms of practices which are traditional, conservative and visible as opposed to child-centered, progressive or invisible, are more likely to be adopted in lower-working class communities, since the latter assume the existence of specific and more developed forms of organizing the timing, pace and language of teaching and learning, which are "less likely to be met in class or ethnically disadvantaged groups, and as a consequences the child is likely to misread the cultural and cognitive significance of such classroom practice, and the teacher is likely to misread the cognitive and cultural significance of the child" (Berstein, 2003: 211).

Another direct practice adopted was the use of data to monitor school and student's performance. Results in external tests and in IDEB indexes were in fact collected, analyzed and further used by

the principal to identify the problems that impacted student's performance. In fact, the principal displayed a detailed knowledge of the school's progress in external tests and through these, he had a clear picture of each different classes and student's performance in each specific year.

Our result in 5th year, we increased from 3.4 to 4.9.. so I think we can reach 5.5 or 6 this year.. 9th year is weaker, it was 2.9 in 2015 [...] but I think we are going to improve in relation to 2013, where 9th grade score was very low (principal, school C).

From observations, it also emerged that during the day of the external evaluation, he entered in the evaluated classes, and motivated student by transmitting an engaged tone and attitude and referring to the international relevance and importance the test has. This direct involvement with students was also confirmed by spending the majority of his time working outside his office, dealing with student's discipline, issues and concerns on a daily basis. It is also important to consider the fact that this was a small school; indeed, school's size may have facilitated principal's direct instructional involvement (Hallinger, 2003).

On the other hand however, he also affirmed to adopt indirect practices on teachers, which mainly focused on communicating and creating a shared-sense making of the policy reform. Indeed, he perceived this to be an effective way to increase teacher's understanding, and hence acceptance of the policy message.

Teachers didn't have a reference and didn't understand what these evaluations meant [...] They started to see this as a ranking, schools against each other, but in reality it is for schools to look at their own schools [...] Now they accept more, they participate.. in 2005/2006 there was resistance, but now the new government stimulated this enculturation in schools. They need to understand why this is, that its not government's holding accountable, but it's an accountability to society... being transparent, this is an aspect which I discuss with principals always.. so Prova brazil yes has been always incorporated by the school, by professors as well (Principal, school C).

Therefore, in this context, we can identify a large involvement of the principal in areas of work which fall under his pedagogical responsibility, in a form of "strategic" pedagogical leadership (Santos, 2017), based on the knowledge and value of performance indicators, the consideration of test results as capital for tracing strategies and improving school's instruction and learning, and the use of shared-sense making and *enculturation* strategies with teachers. This is also confirmed by observations; indeed he spent more time dealing with instructional and pedagogical issues both with students and with teachers, than in his office dealing with paper work, administrative and bureaucratic tasks (as opposed to what happens in other schools).

School A: rich and low-performing municipal school

In school A, a medium-large sized municipal school located in a metropolitan area of the city, school leaders mainly focused on indirect mechanisms of change in order to comply with external accountability demands, such as supporting teacher's capacities in order for teachers to adapt to change.

First, they supported teacher's capacity to adopt to new forms of evaluation and instructional methods, which were more aligned with external test evaluations. These included, for instance, orientating teachers and supporting the adoption of *test-friendly-evaluations*:

There are different ways of evaluating students... like sometimes, you need to evaluate a textual interference and you ask yourself "how can you do it?" [...] and sometimes teachers only gives that same type of question, but then this is being evaluated differently... So here what we do is orientate teachers, we show them... how to evaluate the same thing but with different activities, items, in order for them not to have difficulty with it [...] because then students are going to have to take an external test, you understand? (pedagogical coordinator, school A)

Secondly, school leaders reviewed teacher's pedagogical teaching strategies and curricular planning. This was supported by the fact that as seen in Chapter 2, external tests are curricular-based, meaning that their design is aligned with curricular matrixes and performance levels, on the basis of student's competences and abilities required in the end of educational cycles. This practice was also supported by school leader's understanding about the policy reform, as emerges from the following participant's words.

When these type of external evaluations started, all pedagogy says that an external evaluation cannot be the only criteria to evaluate a student [...] but then we started understanding what this evaluation was... and also that it doesn't have to evaluate all student's abilities... because, for instance, each response evaluates students level of learning in one specific area, and we also had these curricular matrixes to see how a student is developing in each educational level [...] so they (the external tests) select some of the abilities which can be tested, and you can see these in the external test's matrixes, and you learn how to build the same test item by yourself (vice-principal, school A).

Again, the idea of professional's capacity to adapt to change influenced the adoption of these specific identified practices. In fact, they perceived teachers had a difficult time in adjusting their teaching methods, and unresponsive/unwilling to adapt to changes.

... She continued doing it the same way she was and always wanted to... she opened the book and took her cellphone and copied the text and all the type she was copying.. so difficult, yes.. There are some teachers which are like this... you talk, talk but they don't get it (vice-principal, school A).

A performative idea of the teacher, as someone who needs to be motivated, controlled and evaluated externally was also present in this school. Hence, the identification of forms of control and internal accountability on teachers were thought and found to be effective. However, this also created tensions between forms of pressure deriving from external accountability and the difficulty in aligning and controlling teacher's work.

You need to control their planning many times and it is not ready [...] but this is a very serious issue... so you have to control and stay on top of them... Remembering them "you didn't do this, this and this" or "if you don't close the work you're not going on vacation" this is the norm... Professors are being controlled more ("cobrados").

On the other hand, this was also the only school where the school leadership team valued and referred to human, democratic and shared aspects, such as listening and acknowledging teacher's viewpoints, and using affective behaviors towards them.

We also have this human affective aspect... because if this would not happen, if there weren't this combination of factors, you wouldn't achieve a good result. We pretend but at the same time we also give kindness, to everyone (pedagogical coordinator, school C).

Hence, although experiencing tensions between internal and external accountability pressures, school leaders in this school managed the tension by aligning internal accountability structures to the external mandates. This was achieved by supporting teacher's capacities, shared sense making and communication processes, through social and affective attitudes, while at the same time asserting control over them. This may be coming from the fact that it was also one of the only schools in which the school principal was a woman, and where a prominent leadership role was also taken up by the vice-principal and pedagogical coordinators. As will emerge also later on as well, positional power and gender may have a role in supporting these aspects.

School B: rich and high-achieving state school

Finally, school B is a high performing and rich school located in the central area of the city. Here, in order to align to the external accountability demands, the school principal referred to the use of indirect mechanisms of change, which focused on the discussion and communication of external test results with teachers, as well as changes in their teaching practices.

School receives the results and we discuss them, amongst everyone! First with supervisors and professors, we orientate according to the results, then with the school community, to analyze what we should do for the future of these results...(Principal, school B).

While discussing test results with teachers, data was also used to holding them accountable for their results (evidence from teacher's interviews). In addition, for what regards changes in teaching practices, these mainly included instructing teachers to use test simulations and training students for the external test.

Let's say we have been going well this year in Prova Brasil. So from next year, what we will do is to use test simulations every two months for us to prepare better for Prova Brasil. Let's say a student does not know how to fill in the test response sheet ("gabarito") [...] we will train the student in order for him to perform better (principal, school B).

Professors train students, but the pedagogical team and I, we orientate professors... and the supervisor, she makes copies of them (test simulations) and applies them to students (principal, school B).

The adoption of these direct and strategic/instrumental practices may be justified by several factors. First, the lack of trust towards teacher's capacities and sense of motivation. In fact, he perceived teachers as non-motivated actors, who need to be incentivized through external factors, such as exerting control over them or through the use of financial rewards. This is confirmed by a

positive consideration about the high-stake accountability policy (in the form of teacher salary bonuses) as motivating factor.

I think it was interesting (salary bonus) because unfortunately the financial part ends up motivating, so if teachers for instance know that they would get a productivity award if school had better results, they would have a financial incentive.. and I think this ends up motivating professionals (principal, school B).

In addition, he felt that teacher's lack of professionalism and quality derived from a wrong attitude they had towards students, which in turn also undermined schools' results.

The problem, sometimes are teachers... they are all trained, but sometimes it seems as through they didn't have a good training. The pedagogical part, I think sometimes they miss out on this. They don't have that attitude, that behavior in class. So you get the same class and with me they are silent.. then you take the same class with a teacher and it makes noises, it does not perform well, and this weighs a lot in schools (principal, school B).

From this last quote, it is interesting to reflect on the fact that the principal was a male and all teachers in this school were female; indeed, it may be argued that the school principal had a "gendered conception of teachers", as lacking the adequate authority, rationality and instrumental attitude (Dillabough, 1999).

Overall, his non-complete trust towards teacher's commitment and effective teaching strategies, may have hence influenced the adoption of controlling and directive instructional strategies, in order to align to accountability mandates. In this sense, we also have to consider the specificity of this school as a state one, where teachers may also hold flexible part-time contracts (as opposed to municipal schools), that may render the creation of collective sense of trust and collegiality more difficult, as acknowledge by the school principal itself:

In the afternoon, rotation is higher, only 5% are "efeitivos"... so it's difficult to create a group, exactly. In relation to these, what I do is register their behavior. This can be done. And accompany them, give them all the support, and at the same time control them (principal, school B).

5.3 The role of principal's practices and behavior on teacher's responses and implementation of change

Teacher's perceptions and responses regarding the test-based accountability varied amongst them, as well as with regards to the same participants; there were in fact many contradictions and tensions in teachers' responses, which unfortunately fall however out of the scope of this thesis' analysis. In general, however, it emerged that the majority of teachers were critical and resistant about test-based accountability pressures they perceived and only few of them affirmed they used the test results in their teaching planning. According to my analysis, there were however several aspects, part of principal's practices and behaviors, that had an influence on their responses and perceptions regarding the test, hence also on their way of implementing the test based accountability reform.

Sense making and political/ideological interpretation of the policy reform

One of the reasons which rendered teachers resistant to the adoption of the external tests, emerged to be the type understanding teachers had about the purpose of the test, its mechanisms and consequences. For instance, in many cases, teachers only considered the external test as part of a specific policy program; this consideration, supported by their contrasting ideological positions, exacerbated their resistance towards it.

I am very critical in relation to external evaluations, you know? I think the discourse is that they help achieve a standard of quality... but I don't think so [...] I think there are much more political reasons to do these evaluations than to actually improve education (teacher, school B).

In addition, quantitative punctual evaluations were associated with a limited and performative way of evaluating student's in all their peculiarities and subjectivity.

I think evaluation is subjective... because what you are truly evaluating is one moment and they are not actually evaluating the individual process... so you see that a single student has progressed a lot, but what you actually evaluate is only one moment.. so I don't know if it is a mechanisms only to have some graphics about Brasil, showing we have such and such performance level.. there are of course other motivations as well, to organize and to verify school's result. But me, specifically, I don't know if it works well... individuality is not taken in consideration...so for me evaluating the evolution process is much more interesting, and this cannot be evaluated in external tests (teacher, grade 6, school A).

Interestingly, the majority of teachers who held this view were also those who were teaching in non-evaluated classes. Hence, it could be argued that they were also less exposed to a shared understanding and interpretation of the policy message as opposed to teachers who were teaching in evaluated classes. This may be attributed to the fact that teachers are less exposed to the policy message, as opposed to principals, who are considered to be mid-level managers (Spillane et al, 2002a). In fact, in the same school, there appeared to be a gap and distance between teachers' and principal's values regarding the use and purpose of the test. This lack and gap of shared understanding, was highlighted by a participant, teaching in a non-evaluated class, who argued that:

It is like that story of phone without wire, you know... what comes from up there, or what they send here... it arrives with few explanations.. and this generates discomfort in teachers, because you think you need to do it even though you are not agreeing with it.. Because you don't have the adequate information. Because if they gave information, details, we could arrive to agree with it. But if you ask people to do something and then you don't give them the basis, of course there will be more discordancy [...] this is my perception, probably if you go and speak with the leadership team, they have more contact with those who are above us.. so they know better about politics and these evaluations (teacher, grade 6, school A).

On the other side, principal's shared sense making and understanding about the purpose of the test-based accountability had a role in influencing teacher's positive reception of it. In schools where principals affirmed to share with teachers the sense and purpose of the external evaluations, it appeared that teachers (especially those in evaluated classes), expressed less resistance to it.

For instance, the following teacher shared the same understanding of the test with its principal, as a reliable tool to improve student's life chances, also supported by an instrumental and positional (Mc. Cowan, 2010) educational view:

People can also not agree but competition exists and we live in a capitalist world. You can criticize it, understand it's problematic... but you need to prepare for it... so if you put students far away from this reality, they will not know how to face it.. They will need to take examinations, depending on what he will need to do in his professional life, they will need to take these examinations, selection processes... and this is the reality, so you can discuss about it but you need to prepare them for it (Teacher, grade 9, school C).

I believe that these teacher's contradicting responses are also better understood when referring to the evolution of the pedagogical model that the country has gone through during the past decades; in fact, the integral qualitative concept of evaluation, which came with the "Escola Plural" was in contrast to the quantitative nature of evaluations, which were previously in place (Fonseca and Talim, n.d). This shift was also considered to be the major obstacle for the program's implementation, due to teachers and educational staff resistance and fear to loose control over learning processes, and the difficulty of not knowing what to evaluate when substituting evaluation grades with a more qualitative focus (Fonseca and Talim, n.d). Therefore, whether external evaluations were seen as part or in opposition to the "Escola Plural" model, differently shaped their criticism/acceptance towards them. On one side, those who shared the Escola Plural principles and understood external student evaluations as a return to a conservative movement, where quantitative evaluations define the quality of schools and student's learning, were also more critical regarding the nature and quality of the evaluations, what they assess and the controversial effects they may generate. On the other side, those who agreed with the need to return to a traditional model of education, characterized by quantitative evaluations, in explicit resistance towards the Escola Plural project, considered them as a valuable and positive evaluative instrument.

Also, it is important to remember that in Minas Gerais external evaluations have emerged within a center-right government (PSDB), which has governed the country for the past decades. Hence, their political positions also influenced their responses, when understanding it as part of a center-right and neo-liberal educational project.

We are living in Brasil a movement of return to this old model...taking professors out of the class and placing a test which evaluates content, discipline, and what to do in class... you understand? We are living a process which goes from a democratic society to a closer one... we are living in brazil such movement, a conservative one...(teacher, school B).

Instructional leadership, data communication structures with teachers - "enculturation" and internalization of testing practices

Teachers did not have a clear knowledge and understanding about the results of the test, nor their mechanisms of implementation or consequences on school results, which in many cases influenced both their resistance, and criticism towards it. This may be attributed to the fact, that, as

acknowledged by the same teachers, school principals did not discuss and share test results with them. In fact, as we have seen, only in two schools, principals adopted this practice.

The external evaluations, their data, they reach us but its only for the school principal and leadership team, then they should talk with us... but the school principal is already involved in so many things that they end up being disconnected... miscommunicated (teacher, grade 9, school D)

I didn't know. I didn't know when it was, the pedagogical coordinator did not tell me. She wasn't even there yesterday... only thing which I know is that there is another test on the 8th and I only know its not going to be me who applies it to students [...] and these test they have ambiguous content and questions, which I myself had difficulty understanding. (teacher, grade 5, school D)

On the other hand, when principals analyzed, discussed and share test data with teachers (i.e schools B and C), teachers had a more positive consideration towards the external tests. In addition, knowing the results of the test results, was a way for teachers to guide them in their teaching and pedagogical practices, as emerged from the following participant's words.

... They (the external tests) are useful, yes. Not to evaluate but to see student's learning... to guide ("nortear") these professors: "look, this class was below the average, this one is in the average result..." It is for us to have a view of what to teach and how to teach. Because sometimes its not because students don't know, its that they could not learn and you need to create strategies for him to learn in another way (professor, grade 5, school B).

In these schools, teachers also reported that external tests have shaped the language and focus of their classroom instruction. In this sense, the alignment of school's internal structures to external accountability demands comes through the "reshaping the scope of instruction and the instructional improvement conversation" (Knapp and Feldman, 2012); hence, through the ability of school principals to install a culture of testing on teachers.

I think we should work more in what is being evaluated in the test... because sometimes it comes here, the student never saw it before in the class... so I think that a more internal work for people to know what is going to be evaluated, aspects of what I am teaching, what is actually relevant today... sometimes this is lacking, this distancing... you only teach your own way, and then the evaluation comes and evaluates different things [...] so schools should work better with these tests, make it an integral part of classes and daily language (Professor, grade 9, school C).

It is however important also to acknowledge teacher's perception of principal's instructional strategies (Blasé and Blasé, 2002). Only presenting and discussing test results was, not sufficient for teachers to understand their purpose and incorporate them in their practices. For instance, in school B, when school principals reported they were discussing and presenting test results with teachers, on their side, teachers perceived this as a way to hold them accountable and responsible for school's results. Hence, acknowledging and presenting school test results but not further interpreting, analyzing and giving sense to these results, increased teacher's sense of self-responsibility and pressure.

The school principal reunites us and tells us "look this year, the result has been like this... last year it was better than this year... why... why did it fall?" but here comes the difficult part.. Because they talk in general about the results of the school, not of each specific class, so maybe I have achieved my objectives and another teacher hasn't [...] so we need to discover why the grade went down! And you

don't know why, so, yes, it's complicated... you ask yourself " was it me? , did I do something wrong?" a lot of pressure, yes!

In other words, "the effective instructional leader's approach to instruction was found to be dialogic, inquiry-oriented, inclusive, and pedagogically sound" (Blasé and Blasé, 2002).

Pedagogical leadership support

Teachers also often referred to the fact they were left by themselves and lacked the adequate support from their superiors. It also emerged this was often related to their perception that those working in the leadership team were involved in a lot of bureaucratic and administrative tasks, which left little time to adequately support teacher's professional development. This emerged repeatedly in interviews:

The coordinators they don't have a lot of time to work... they have a lot of bureaucratic things to do and little time for teachers (Patricia, school A).

The school coordination is very weak. We need to do everything by ourselves, they try to keep a good organization but they can't even do that [...] you can't even go talk to them because they have so many things and people around... it's a confusion, we can't go there and convers... we are missing a space for this (teacher, grade 2, school A)

The more teachers felt distant and less supported from their superiors, the more they also expressed difficulty and dissatisfaction in their work. This is especially the case for younger teachers and those who were working school since less time.

I feel we are very abandoned in this school.. the fact of having a support, you know? To value our service. We are not valued in the way we should be here.. and I think they make a mistake in this.. the class of professionals is not going in a positive direction, as a constructive critique, you know? [...] and many times, as a professor, you already need to know, I always tell my students " you think a professor knows everything, but she doesn't and many things she learns with you, things she didn't know... " but that structure, of having a support, you really don't have it..." (Teacher, grade 5, school D).

Indeed, if we consider the type of accountability environment teachers were working in, characterized by high autonomy in terms of planning, but on the other hand with forms of control and limitations through outcome-based accountability processes, it is reasonable to think that those younger inexperienced teachers, struggled more in their work. This is confirmed by the fact that older teachers, valued the autonomy they had in their planning, more. In addition, this type of accountability environment made teacher's feel self responsible for student's achievements and results, due to factors out of their control; hence, the perception of "working by themselves" and feeling "abandoned" did not sustain their sense of self-efficacy.

In the end the discourse is always "what did the professor do?" she did nothing" but actually the professor did, it's only that by herself she couldn't. But in the end its always the professor who didn't help, who wasn't good enough, who didn't know enough about the subject (teacher, grade 5, school B).

On the contrary, collective moments of shared learning helped teachers in their sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction, as also emerges from the following participant's words:

When during break time we start talking between us, teachers start understanding more about the student's learning processes... but if there weren't these collective moments... I don't know [...] when we work together it is much more productive you know? (Teacher, school A).

Yes, because, me, by myself, what do I do? Logically, I do my part, but I also see that if I discuss things to my self, I will also just listen to myself (teacher, 5th year, school D).

The presence of collective learning spaces was much more present and facilitated in small schools, where teachers had the chance to reunite and discuss regarding pedagogical aspects with much more frequency amongst each other.

In addition, it could be argued that if principals and/or leadership team did give a major and more relevant support to teachers, this would have facilitated their implementation of change, through sustaining their professional capacities, reducing pressures, and sustaining their sense of self-efficacy.

However, in no schools, teachers had this sense of support and shared learning coming from the leadership team. In part, this could be related to the fact, that, as reflected and acknowledged by a school pedagogical coordinator herself, a vertical system of bureaucratic outcome-based accountability induces school leaders to focus on formally controlling teacher's planning and results, through forms of internal accountability and control, without providing them the necessary and valuable professional support and accompaniment.

What I see is that there is the secretary of education who controls the principal, the principal who controls the work of pedagogical coordinators, and the pedagogical coordinators who control teachers... so the pedagogical part is like "did you bring your planning? Your planning is like this... but you should maybe change this word", you know, like these small things... because in the administrations, they want an ideal form of working with specific content and issues.. so we have to reunite professors, show them, but I think sometimes this is actually not really a form of support for teachers [...] many times it's more like: "oh another paper, they are going to ask me something, telling me I did something wrong" ... although actually they should find in us a support system, a figure of support, usually it's more a fiscal form of control (pedagogical coordinator, school C).

Collegial relations and positive school environment

The ability of principals and the leadership team to create a positive learning climate, where good and collaborative relationship were present amongst staff members, was also highly appreciated by teachers. This environment of shared values, as argued by Van Maele and Van Houtte (2012), manages to increase the trust amongst teachers, which in turn improves school's functioning.

You need to be able to create that space of good relationship amongst people and that these share a common objective [...] the human aspect, of good relationship [...] I think the role of the school principal is this, of a positive leadership, who knows how to create a good environment and calm down in its possibility (teacher, grade 9, school C).

This is especially valuable in those lower SES school contexts, where issues of student discipline and aggressiveness emerged as a discriminatory factor for teachers. Hence, where good relationships and positive school climate had a major role in mitigating these perceived negative aspects.

Sometimes the coordination team lacks a sense of organization... sometimes they are more involved in other things and this affects us... but the leadership is one that manages to create a good environment, climate, which I think is fundamental in a school, where you don't feel that pressure to be here, where there is student's aggressiveness which negatively contributes (teacher, grade 9, school C).

Also, the fact that municipal schools had a stable team of professors (with *efetivo* contracts) may have facilitated the creation of collective and positive environment, and avoided the emergence of conflict amongst teachers; indeed, in state schools, there emerged to be more conflict amongst teachers than in municipal ones.

Perception about principal's democratic and ethical leadership

It is important to acknowledge that the perception teachers had about the same principals varied greatly amongst them. Those who were working in the school for more time, had a more positive and understanding perspective of the principal's behavior and leadership style. This was important, since those who had a positive perception about their school leaders in general, were also more positively responsive about policy changes and reforms and had a more positive perception about their profession, as a whole, which helped in sustaining their self-efficacy and satisfaction.

On one side, in the school where principal was perceived to adopt unethical opportunistic behaviors regarding the implementation of test-based accountability, teachers were critical and resistant to this style and practice. In addition, in the same school where the principal had a difficult communication and relationship with teachers (school D), referring to power issues and difficulty in exerting control over teachers due to the perception they had regarding his authoritative position, teachers also perceived his attitude as authoritative and disrespectful.

Regarding our superiors... I don't know if it is the person itself who carries with him, his way of being and ideology... he says "oh just for a change you came here late", a day when a mother was in the school too. I never arrive here late. And he speaks about the fact he is the one who leads, who has the authority, who leads "who leads here is me" , only to show himself you, know? (Teacher, grade 5, school D).

In this same school, teachers acknowledged this factor to be discriminatory for the decision of staying or not in the school.

On the other hand, teachers in other schools, who positively considered principal's/and or leader's style in general, referred to aspect of listening, devolving power and involving them in decision-makings, which align with the transformational and democratic leadership styles. In parallel, these teachers also expressed more satisfaction in their job.

We have a really cool principal, you know? Because, even more than giving us openness, dialogue amongst us, he gives us the openness to talk to him, to tell him this is not going well.. let's do it this way.. he has a lot of flexibility. And this is very nice, you know? He is one who tells us "we are going to change, we are going to do it this way", he wants the best for our school you know? (teacher, grade 5, school B).

In our school the school leader participates quite a bit in things, in pedagogical decisions. Especially the vice-principal, she gives us a lot of support. So you go to her with a project and she listens to you, looks what you need (teacher, grade 4, school A).

This perception of a positive democratic and distributed leadership style was in general more present in high SES contexts. And may be related to the fact that, as seen, in low-SES, principals mainly adopt a more specific and direct instructional strategies with teachers, in order to comply rapidly with the accountability demands.

Indeed, although considered by principal's themselves to be a positive value, it was also difficult to achieve, as seen in literature especially in low performing contexts. In fact, when principals' discourses and values leaned towards democratic and shared practices, in the end they were perceived as top – down directive ones; where the principal was perceived to hold a centralized and authoritative role.

The role of positional power, gender and leadership

School principals felt responsible for the achievement of school outcomes and results; in addition, they talked about school performance and results as being "theirs" and referred to their capacities as educational leaders in achieving these outcomes. This emerged in expressions such as "I have achieved this number of students", or "I managed to increase the number of students enrolled" or "we have reached 5.5 as a target". These statements reflect the idea of school principals under accountability regimes who new "heros of educational reform" (Ball, 2003).

In terms of tensions experienced between internal and external accountability expectations (Elmore, 2005), it resulted that school principals, in general, experienced a low level of conflict between their internal (professional and moral) and outcome-based external accountability demands. Indeed, what they thought had to be done, and what was required externally from the outcome-based accountability reform, most often aligned.

On the contrary, those of participants working in the school leadership team (i.e vice principals and pedagogical coordinators), expressed conflicting and critical considerations regarding what was required do to comply with external outcome-based accountability policies, as opposed to what they considered to be the best option. This resulted in higher moral and professional reasoning, in a form of moral accountability (Normore, 2004), as well as with higher criticisms towards government mandates, and high tensions between their normative values and perceived required demands.

I thought I was serving more government's agenda than societies. I thought "we are becoming "vaquinhas da presepio" (expression meaning "someone who always agrees on everything"), you are forced to collaborate and make up the situation, so in reality you are a representative of the government, who needs to show what they want to [...] there is a great distance between what is

presented and what is really going on [...] data is made up and school directors collaborate with this, you know, we are obliged to collaborate (teacher, school B).

This may come from the fact that principals are more exposed to the policy message and to government structures. On the other hand, a higher conflict between internal, moral and professional and external accountability demands may be also attributed to gender factors. In fact, although sampling was not based on gender variable (only 5 out of 32 participants were male), what emerged is that females identified more professional and moral accountability as influencing their responses, more than males did. In addition, this is also confirmed by the fact that those holding principal's positions were almost all men (75%).

Furthermore, women in leadership positions, who had major contact and worked with teachers more, also perceived higher conflict when they needed to exert control and hold teachers accountable for school results; indeed, they defended and considered teacher's necessities and view points as well as student's ones, actively prioritizing forms of moral internal accountability over external one. In terms of leadership effectiveness, this is even more important in a group setting since "group members will elect a leader who seems capable of representing the best interests of the group" (Appelbaum et al, 2003: 46).

So they ask for quality, and they look for specific results... but they don't accept the fact that there are some students who do not learn, for their own difficulty... so what can you do? [...] the end of the year arrives and you need to close of the results, and me myself I am not immune to this... and professors they are right you know when they say " you want me to invent a grade?" teachers are not so wrong, no (Pedagogical coordinator, School C).

I think things should be more flexible, but they don't consider this, they only think about numbers, because they are only asking for some specific results [...] but they forget that with people it doesn't work this way... and what worries us is student's learning, because our interest is that they will continue and evolve (vice-principal, school C).

Teachers on their side, confirmed these aspects and expressed to have a closer relationship with those leaders belonging to the leadership team, much more than they did with the principal itself. As previously discussed, in fact, they often perceived principals as unenviable and distant and this role as managerial and authoritative. In addition, this may be associated with the attitudinal drivers of men in leadership positions, which are characterized by structure, instruction-giving and transactional aspects, as opposed to considerate, people-oriented and participative attitudinal drivers of women in leadership positions (Appelbaum et al, 2003; Court, 1998). Indeed, teachers appreciated much more aspects of relational capacity, empathy, dialogue and understanding, which are associated with female identity in the teaching profession (Dillabough, 1999).

I have a closer relationship with the pedagogical supervisor, also because they (principal and vice-principal) they are very occupied with other things to solve in the educational secretary, so we have more access to her (the pedagogical coordinator), and we end up sharing, exchanging more things with her [...] my relationship with her is more intimate.. also when I have a personal issues that I need to solve, I go to her and talk to her about it, so we end up creating that proximity, you know? (teacher, grade 9, school D)

5.4 The limitation of external material factors: teacher working conditions and student SES

Many teachers complained repetitively about their working conditions, referring to issues of work and activity overload, salary and lack of material conditions. As an example, one participant expresses itself in the following way:

Oh yes, we are working on Saturdays because we need to pay for the strike we had... what isn't it that we do to try and improve something in our salary, huh? Because our salary is not the normal salary of all labor unions... Our working conditions are precarious [...] and today, here in school, we have nothing.. not even paper to make photocopies, which I have to ask colleagues and friends for, in order to make it up for a situation that at least in this, the government should comply with [...] So we have low salary, and we also work a lot.. because I finish here and go work at home.. This I can guarantee, that 100% of professors do this.. They go home and do their activities, correct home works and all of their time is involved in education [...] Our salary is very bad, so to receive what I receive, I need to work 11 hours per day, if not I can't (Teacher, grade 2, School D).

On the one side, the precarious working conditions undermined teacher's time and capacity to effectively be involvement in policy decision-making decisions, which was expressed by teacher's lesser participation in political and labor union affiliations. Indeed, teachers often highlighted how their political investment and interest in labor union's struggles was little or had decreased over time.

I am not directly bound to teacher's labor union; I am not affiliated to it... I think it is important to have it as a presence, but there are also some controversies... sometimes it does not really represent teacher's conditions and interests... and there is still a bit of a distance [...] me, for example I participate little in general to assemblies and strikes.. [...] I also think that teacher's conditions undermines this struggle a bit.. because we need to work a lot, and do not receive a good salary.. so, for instance if we had exclusive dedication to one class ("dedicação exclusiva") and a better salary, I also think we would have more time for these discussions (Teacher, school C).

On the other hand, teacher's highlighted the effect that their working conditions had on stress and job satisfaction. As a result, they perceived the quality and effective accomplishment of their work to be challenged and more difficult.

You know what they (government administration) say? That the teacher needs to be creative! That she needs to find other ways of giving class in order for students to learn.. [...] but we need to work in three different schools, in the morning, afternoon and night, without resting and enjoying things... and then you should arrive to school satisfied and happy, to give class in a creative way [...] but I am dead of tiredness! (teacher, school B).

These poor working conditions and lack of material resources resulted especially in state schools. This could be related first, to the type of decentralized/federal governance, in terms of financial autonomy administrative units hold, which renders school conditions different amongst them. Secondly, for what regards teacher's working conditions, the type of temporary contract teachers hold in state schools (i.e *efetivado*), could play a role in creating more unsatisfactory and precarious job conditions. In this sense, since contract, working conditions and salary are linked issues (as discussed in Ch. 2), in state schools, although resisting and criticizing test-based

accountability pressures, teachers also positively perceived the salary bonus (i.e high-stake accountability), due to it's increased financial consequences.

...We received it positively yes, because If you are well evaluated you would receive more, you understand? (Teacher, school B)

Teacher's difficulties in implementing policy changes were also highly related to students' SES. In fact, in schools with a lower student socio-economic composition, teachers (and all staff members, generally) complained about issues regarding student's discipline, interest and engagement. Student's discipline in turn also undermined teacher's sense of purpose and increased their frustration and de-motivation. Indeed, often teachers recognized they were not being listened by students, and hence also perceived higher de-motivation, frustration and pressure in increasing student's results and to comply with the accountability demands.

Many time teachers are dissimulated, you know? Because as much as you can dedicate yourself to teaching, as much as you are committed, in the end if you speak, speak and you don't manage that students understand... but at the same time you also need to achieve what had been determined and stipulated (Teacher, school C).

This may also be related to the fact that, for participants working in more challenging circumstances, curricular content was perceived to be irrelevant for students, and the role of education to improve student's life chances as limited. In this sense, both education's intrinsic, as well as instrumental (Mc Cowan, 2010) value was undermined by student's socio-economic background. In turn, this perception of lack of meaningful education was considered to impact student's disengagement and hence also increase teacher's de-motivation in effectively stimulating and improving student's learning.

For some teachers it is even more difficult, and I hear many of them saying "I don't think this has any meaning for this student... I know I am doing this, for nothing" I already heard this so many times (school pedagogical coordinator, school C).

In this sense, the organizational composition of students influences the aspect of teacher's trust and expectations towards students (Diamond and Spillane, 2004; Van Maele and Van Houtte, 2009), which sustains or reduces teacher's perception of own self-efficacy.

To conclude, material/economic factors such as student's SES and teacher's laboring conditions had a high influence on teacher's responses about their job satisfaction, perception of self-efficacy and capacity to effectively improve student's performance.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and discussions

In this thesis, I have analyzed the role of principal's leadership in mediating school autonomy and accountability (SAWA)³⁰ policies in the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil). This has been done by adopting a multiple (Shippo and White, 2009), policy contingent (Spillane et al, 2002a) and cognitive (Spillane et al, 2002b) accountability framework in which school principals are viewed as "managers in the middle" the policy and the school level; accordingly, principals perceive and make sense of the multiple contrasting accountability pressures, negotiate between internal and external demands, and adopt practices that respond to both the policy message and the school environment. Specifically, I have analyzed teachers' and principals' discourses and practices in four different – in terms of test results and student's socio-economic status - public schools in the city of Belo Horizonte both considering principals' sense making underpinning those practices, as well as the contextual school factors in which participants are embedded. In Ball's (2012) terminology, I have analyzed the policy enactment of the test-based accountability reform, as in interpretation and translation of policy at school level. Theories of leadership and their effectiveness have been unpacked and mainly considered as in tasks and practices adopted in response to the accountability pressures; these have been differentiated in direct practices on school instructional strategy, curriculum and students and indirect ones on organizational features (see Hallinger, 2003). In addition, by recognizing the dynamic relationship between the individual and context, and the non-deterministic progression of a policy reform, the study has been guided by a realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 2004), according to which, before assuming any effect or generated effect, it is important to identifying the mechanisms and contextual factors, which generate and/or mediate the specific outcomes.

A framed and contingent leadership

School principals in Brazil are found to perceive pressures deriving from the external accountability mandates and to adopt several different practices in order to align with the policy mandate. Interestingly, these strategies are framed by and contingent to several factors: first, their defined legislative roles, which require principals to be majorly involved in bureaucratic, financial and administrative tasks; principals are also required to hold an important strategic pedagogical role to achieve externally defined educational objectives. In fact, the outcome-based external accountability policy requires principals to be involved in different areas and display a complex set of different capacities. This translates in a perception of work overload and self-responsibilization as well as less time devoted to adequately instruct and support teacher's pedagogical and teaching

³⁰ SAWA policies have been identified as a conjunction of multiple accountability policies attached to the results of national (SIMAVE) and federal (Prova Brasil) tests.

capacities. Secondly, a context deprived from adequate training and human resources in schools, exacerbated this perceived responsibility. Therefore, supporting principals' training and building the necessary leadership capacities may be thus recommendable to support the policy implementation in schools.

The adopted leadership practices were also contingent to the professional and institutional contexts in which principals work; the former was expressed through the idea and value given to teacher's professionalism and their quality, which mediated and shaped their responses through the degree of trust they had towards teachers; explanatory institutional contextual variables, on the other side, resulted to be school's administrative dependency, size, and student intake in terms of socio-economic status.

- Municipal/state differences

The school administrative dependency was found to have an influence on shaping principal's practices, through two main mechanisms: first, teacher's working conditions in terms of contract status differed from one to other administrative unit, and hence also their mobility, which influenced the degree of staff's cohesiveness and thus principal's ability to effectively sustain a shared learning community; and second through the perceived support and dialogue with administrative governments. In contrast to state schools, municipal schools had a closer dialogue with and received more instruction and support from educational authorities with regards to policy reforms, which in turn mitigated principal's perceived pressures as well as increased principal's understanding and use of testing data.

- School size

In terms of school size, smaller schools with more communal areas facilitated principal's communication and instructional leadership, and increased the school's overall shared values and sense making.

- Student's SES

Finally, student's socio-economic status had a role in shaping principal's practices, directly or indirectly in different ways. For instance, principals were found to adopt the instructional strategy, pedagogy and school's priorities, on the basis of school's local context in terms of student's cultural and socio-economic characteristics. Student's SES and discipline were also a key factor in sustaining teacher's sense of their work, commitment and satisfaction; which in turn rendered principal's ability to positively influence teachers, more difficult.

Therefore, considering teachers at the frontline of delivering test-based accountability reforms to students, school principals are found to hold a role in influencing their understanding, sense-making and ultimately reception of accountability reforms. However, as hypothesized, material external factors question the degree and extent to which these practices are adopted and their effectiveness in sustaining teachers' positive understanding and implementation of the reform.

In addition, in a more complex combination of external factors than those which had been hypothesized, regardless of school's results, school's intake in terms of student's socio-economic background, and school's administrative dependency, have been found to have a more prominent role in shaping principal's practices in all the four schools. School test results in fact, may be

subject to interpretation and are decoded in relation to schools' past performance or to other reference school or country. If these variables shape and mediate principals' practices and hence the policy translation (Ball, 2012), it is worthwhile to build upon a policy and research, which takes into account the contexts and contingencies of principal's leadership. In addition, investing and sustaining teachers' working conditions, in state schools especially, would facilitate principals' capacity to align the internal to external accountability.

Involvement in decision-making and trust in government structures

Principal's perception of accountability pressures was related to how they made sense of the reform. In other words, the understanding and interpretation of the policy reform - whether associated with a managerial, administrative, marketing type of accountability (Shipps and White, 2009) - shaped the degree of pressure perceived and the value given to the test-based policies. In addition, what emerged was a gap in understanding and value given to the test-based accountability by principals or teachers; while the first demonstrated to have a major closeness with government structures and understanding of policy reforms, the latter majorly expressed distance and mistrust in government structures, which influenced their resistance to the policy reform. Indeed, teacher's lack of involvement in policy decision-making and distance resulted to be a factor of resistance to accepting the policy message; for instance, those teaching in non-evaluated classes, who we assume have less exposure to the policy message, expressed more resistance to test-based accountability. In addition, principal's appropriation and adequate shared sense-making with teachers, resulted in teacher's more positive understanding and thus less resistance to the policy message.

Hence, if we consider that school principals are at the front line of policy messages, a clear and positive understanding of the test-based accountability reform, in this case, but in general of any governmental policy, would therefore be a recommendable action in order for school leaders to receive and therefore communicate the policy message effectively to teachers. In fact, supporting the creation of an organizational learning community, with shared values and understanding of the policy message seems to be an effective way for a successful implementation of the reform. In Elmore's (2005) terminology, the alignment between internal and external accountability represents an effective way to implement policy messages in schools.

In addition, in terms of leadership's way of communication and instructing the policy message to teachers, whether principals adopted an instructional leadership, in the sense of supporting teacher's instructional capacities, or a more directive form of control, differently impacted teacher's responses and perceptions of both the policy message. An effective system of school accountability, both within school leadership team and government (municipal/state) structures, both internally between leadership team and teachers, characterized by supporting rather than controlling mechanism would therefore represent a valuable mechanism to align and thus effectively coordinate policy intentions and messages, from the institutional to the school level.

Test's centrality, or not?

The value and use of test data greatly varied amongst participants. Although all principals considered the test to be of importance and central in governmental action, the use of data by school principals in low and high socio-economic schools diverged. Contrary to what I hypothesized, in low SES schools, school principals adopted expressive strategies to align with accountability demands, amongst which appropriating the testing policy instrument also for educative purposes and not only performative or political ones. In these schools, principals displayed higher knowledge of the test design and purpose, and data was in fact used by school principals to set priorities for student's learning and not only to enhance test scores. In these schools, the value and purpose of the policy instrument was also transmitted and communicated to teachers, who in fact were also found to majorly have internalized and valued the testing data in their classroom practices. On the contrary, in high SES schools, school principals used strategies to increase scores in external tests such as training students, and opportunistic behaviors (i.e. cheating). In these contexts, principals directly instructed teachers, without sharing the educative value of the test data, hence without supporting an effective internalization and use of the data in classes. Hence, school principal's understanding, shared communication and value given to the test data, was found to be a mediating factor on teacher's reception and use of test-based accountability mechanisms.

There are several implications, which can be drawn from here: first, it is necessary to support leader's capacities to effectively understand, use and integrate data in the school practices, in both low and high socio-economic public school contexts; secondly, if perceptions and values regarding the policy instruments vary greatly amongst participants, an evaluation of public policies, which considers the voice and perception of those who are expected to directly use the policy instrument, may be recommendable. Finally, both in policy areas and in schools, a dialogue regarding the value of educational quality and its measurement, critically discussing the test designs, indicators and their measured aspects, could sustain a conscious and effective appropriation of the data for educative purposes.

Vertical managerial accountability in a democratic discourse: gaps and tensions

In a context of school autonomy with high-stakes accountability, school principals and teacher's responses were also shaped by a democratic ideological discourse on one side, and a vertical managerial accountability model, on the other. In terms of ideological views and values, participants who had a positive consideration about the test, often associated it with a neo-liberal and instrumental value of education. Secondly, teacher's perceptions of the value of the test were also shaped by their consideration regarding the country's pedagogical model evolution, which shifted from a progressive, processual, and qualitative to a traditional, conservative one. Hence, it is important to consider the fact that responses to external evaluations change with the evolution of public policies, and are framed within the historical and contextual countries' educational/pedagogical model and ideological position of subjects.

While democratic educational discourses were frequent, in practice, principals adopted a more traditional pedagogical model. In fact, in low SES and low performing schools, a traditional pedagogy (Berstein, 2003) was considered to be more effective than more experimental or

innovative approaches. In addition, this gap and tension between ideological democratic discourses and institutional practices also emerged with regards to principal's distributed and shared leadership style; although the presence of a school collegiality with its democratic mechanisms sustained shared and collective decision-makings, teacher's perceived principal's leadership style to be associated with managerial and top-down power dynamics.

Hence, the extent to which a truly democratic leadership practice could be implemented in a context where school principals feel the need to controlling teacher's work in order to align with external accountability demands is questionable. A purely democratic leadership behavior is in fact difficult to achieve where school principals need to align with the policy message and face more difficulties in doing so. On the other side, supporting the conditions for this to happen, for instance adopting a horizontal internal school accountability, through flattened relationships, the devolution of power to teachers, could support teacher's leadership capacities and role in the reception and dialogue with government structures, ultimately increasing their involvement in decision-making and a more positive reception and implementation of the reform.

Leadership through a gendered lens

When analyzing teacher's perception of principal's leadership style, teachers considered that a social, human and shared leadership approach is the most effective and the one they appreciated the most. In contrast, an authoritative, managerial and directive behavior of principals resulted in teacher's critical perception of principal's role, a more negative relationship with their supervisor, and a more critical approach to policy change. This difference in leadership behaviors was influenced by leader's experienced tensions between internal professional judgments and external demands, which is in general considered to be a persistent conflict under accountability regimes (e.g Shipps and White, 2009).

However, in this study, gender emerged to be strong mediating factor. Indeed, male leaders were generally found to experience less conflict between what was required to do and what they were doing, hence displayed a more coherent, rational, and strategic decision-making approach, which resulted in often directive and controlling behaviors towards teachers. On their part, female leaders displayed higher conflict between professional and moral values with external demands, and between the need to control and supervise teachers and align to external outcomes, resulting in more critical approach to policy messages, reflexive judgments and a more understanding and accommodating attitude towards teachers. In addition, when male leaders expressed difficulty in controlling teacher's work, this was explicitly attributed to teacher's "gendered" characteristics and attitudes. While it is difficult to attribute this difference solely to a gender component, since female leader's position in schools could have potentially also contributed to a more collaborative and understanding perspective³¹, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the value given by teachers to a more supportive, collaborative and human way of leading. On the contrary, teacher's perception of principal's role was associated with political responsibility, managerial capacities and top-down directive behaviors to align to external demands. Thus, "what it means to be a leader" in

³¹ Female leaders were either vice-principals or pedagogical coordinators – who legislatively and hierarchically work more closely with teachers.

such demanding accountability context is more highly associated with leader's strategic behaviors, than with ethical, empathetic or integral ways of being.

Therefore, without essentialising gender attitudes and nature, since there is not a universal 'woman's way of leading' (Court, 1998), balancing between autocratic, managerial and human/social traits of leading could potentially overcome school internal conflicts and facilitate a positive school climate for the implementation of policy reforms. In addition, in a context where there is a clear gap between female and male in positions of responsibilities, supporting the attractiveness of principal's position, as well as distributing leadership responsibilities to female participants in schools could help to overcome this gender gap and overcome traditional gender roles in profession.

To conclude, with this thesis, I have unpacked the effects of education governance reforms at the school level. Specifically, I have evaluated the role of school principals in mediating and enacting school autonomy with accountability (SAWA) reforms in a context of performative, managerial and high-stake testing. The analytical/theoretical lenses adopted have enabled to problematize leadership practices and styles, hence to go beyond the literature on school effectiveness, by considering the institutional, material and professional variables, which mediate discourses and practices. As a result, it could be argued that within the purpose of improving educational quality, it is important to recognize the role of school principals, but also consider a shared responsibility with other school leaders and the entire school community; in addition, it is fundamental to identify the determinant contingent school institutional and external factors, and their role in shaping teachers' reception of policy reforms through school principals' practices.

On the basis of this, potential future lines of research could be:

- First, integrating a gendered and distributed perspective to studies on leadership and accountability;
- Secondly, in the context of also other federal/decentralized countries, analyzing the difference in policy enactment within different administrative units (i.e municipal/state schools), which in the case of Brazil, emerged to be a relevant variable in explaining different school practices;
- Finally, in terms of methodology, utilizing ethnographic visual sociology techniques, such as photo elicitation methods (see Werts and Brewer, 2014), to deepen the way school staff (both leaders and teachers) subjectively live and experience accountability pressures in their daily lives, and to understand how this is further integrated in their discourses/negotiated practices.

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Annexes

Annex Table 1: The general structure of Brazilian Education system and educational authorities

General Level	Specific level	Name in portuguese	International denomination	Age	Grades/y ears	ISCED level - '97	Authority	
Basic Education	Early Childhood education	Educação Infantil - creche	Child care/initial education	0-3	4 years	0	Municipalities	
		Educação Infantil - pré-escola	Pre-school	4-5	2 years	0		
	Primary education	Ensino Fundamental – Anos Iniciais (1-5)	Elementary Education	6-10	1st - 5th year	1	Municipalities	
		Ensino Fundamental – Anos Finais (6-9)	Lower secondary education	11-14	6th-9th year	2A		
	Secondary education	Ensino Médio	Upper Secondary Education	15-17	1st-3rd form	3A	States	
	Vocational and technological education	Educação Profissional de Nível Médio (integrada e concomitante)	Professional Education at the Upper Secondary Level	15-17	1st-3rd Form	3B		
Higher education	Sequential courses (specific)	Educação Profissional de Nível Médio (subsequente)		Above 18	1600 hours	3C	Federal Government	
	Complementary courses				Variable	5A		
	Graduate	Educação Superior - Graduação - Bacharelado	Bachelor's			2,400 hours		5B
		Educação Superior - Graduação - Licenciatura	Higher Diploma			2,800 hours		
			Technological Diploma			1,600 hours		

	Postgraduate	Maestrado	Master's		2 years	
		Doutorado	PhD		2 years	
		Grado Profissional	Professional degree		3 years	
		Cursos de Especialização (certificado)	Specialization courses (certificate)		360 hours	

Source: own elaboration based on UNESCO (2015, p. 9) and UNESCO (2010, p. 5).

Annex Table 2: Accountability typologies and leadership practices

Accountability type	Characteristics	Leadership practices
Market	Improving schools through competition	Creativity, efficiency; Create marketable product, Develop good customer relations Respond to quickly changing market conditions, Clarify mission, Considerable variation among leaders
Decentralization	Forms of site-based management, devolution of decision making	Empower parents and other community members to make wise decisions; encourage sharing of power and distribution of leadership; Skilled resource management
Managerial/Management	Strategic planning (strategic, school improvement), School reviews, inspection, Student testing	Strategic management, collecting and interpreting systematically collected data; Manage planning processes
Professional	Focus on teachers and other support staff as they acquire specialized knowledge and skills, meet standards for entry into the profession, and uphold professional standards of practice for their work.	Coaching and mentoring; Granting autonomy to teachers, Create professional learning communities, Distribute leadership to staff, Know about best professional practices Assist staff in identifying appropriate standards for their work, Set expectations and monitor progress
Administrative/Bureaucratic	Regulations, standards and consequences for systemic alignment	Compliance; Managing resources and coordinating expectations
Moral	Moral and ethical principles; personal obligations and sense of duty; Individual's personal commitment to values deemed important at the school site (Normore, 2004); Social justice effort (Shipps and White, 2009).	Moral persuasion or ethical reasoning
Performance-based	Use of large-scale student testing as an apparatus for accountability in education (Pollock and Whinston, 2015).	
Legal	Enforce legal mandates; the expectation that schools will operate in accordance with the laws and the regulations governing them.	
Political	Citizen pressure (Shipps and White, 2009); Focus on members of government and trustees who are elected and who are answerable to the public for their decisions (Winston and Pollock, 2015).	Suppressing, negotiating or mobilizing conflict

Source: own elaboration based on Shipps and White, 2009; Leithwood, 2001; Pollock and Winston, 2015

Annex Table 3: Composition of school leadership team, in Minas Gerais (Brasil) public schools

Name of position	Criteria for designation of function	Main Tasks/Competencies
<p>Gestor Escolar/Diretor (Principal)</p>	<p>Be a teacher of Basic Education or a Specialist in Basic Education, holder of a stable public contract; to have passed an examination of Occupational Certification of School Leadership conducted by the State Secretariat of Education of Minas Gerais in 2007 or 2010; have a full or equivalent degree or a course in Pedagogy; (70%) (seventy percent) in the last Performance Evaluation, in the part related to the qualitative evaluation; be in regular standing with the Federal Revenue Service of Brazil; be able to fully exercise the presidency of Caixa Escolar, especially the financial and banking movement; be up to date with election obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Officially represent the school, making it open to the interests of the community, encouraging the involvement of students, parents, teachers and other members of the school team; - To ensure that the state school offers quality educational services through the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To coordinate the Pedagogical Project, - To support the development and dissemination of pedagogical evaluation - To adopt measures to raise the levels of student proficiency and to remedy the difficulties pointed out in the external evaluations - Stimulate the professional development of teachers and other employees in their training and qualification; - Organize the staff and be responsible for controlling the attendance of public servants; - Define and enforce the school calendar as well as distribute classes, functions and shifts; - Conduct the evaluation performance of the school staff; - To be responsible for the maintenance and updating of the functional process of public servant; - Guarantee the legality and regularity of the school and the authenticity of the students' school life; - Ensure the maintenance of property, school buildings and furniture; - Indicate the need for renovation and expansion of the building and heritage assets; - To preside over the school collegiate - "Prestar contas" for the actions taken during the period in which he exercises the direction of the school and the presidency of the <i>School Collegiate</i>; - Ensure the regular functioning of the <i>Caixa Escolar</i>, being responsible for all the acts practiced in the management of the school. - To provide, with reliability, the data requested by the SEE / MG, observing the established deadlines.
<p>Vice - diretor (Vice-principal)</p>	<p>Be a teacher of Basic Education or Specialist in Basic Education, holder of stable public contract; have a full or equivalent degree or a course in Pedagogy; working in the school for which you want to apply for the position; have achieved a score equal to or greater than 70% (seventy percent) in the last Performance Evaluation, in the part related to the qualitative evaluation; be in regular standing with the Federal Revenue Service of Brazil; be able to fully exercise the presidency of Caixa Escolar, especially the financial and banking movement; be up to date with election obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assume the tasks assigned by the School principal; - Fulfill the commitments made by the principal in his / her absence; - To ensure that the state school gradually raises the standards of school learning for its students and contributes to the formation of citizenship; - To replace the principal in temporary removals or in the vacancy of the position, pursuant to SEE Resolution No. 1812 of March 22, 2011.
<p>Especialista em Educação Básica (EEB)/Coordenador Pedagógico (Education Specialist/Pedagogic</p>	<p>Pedagogy course with qualification in Educational Orientation; or Pedagogy course or degree in any area of knowledge, plus a course of post-graduation courses in Educational</p>	<p>Evaluates and advises on pedagogical and curricular activities. To supervise and support, providing pedagogical and educational assistance. In addition to relating with the parents and community, she/he is responsible for the didactic functioning of the school and interpretation of the students' evaluation. The Education Specialist plays a very</p>

al Coordinator)	Guidance or in Pedagogical or Management Coordination School, structured around the axis "Organization of Pedagogical Work".	important role in the coordination and articulation of the teaching-learning process, being co-responsible, with the direction of the school, in the leadership of the pedagogical management that should be the axis to guide the planning, implementation and development of actions education. In this sense, the Specialist is opened to three fundamental fields of action in the school, interconnected and articulated among themselves, covering the actions of planning, implementation, organization and evaluation of the process of teaching and learning, mediated by the need to guarantee an internal climate favorable to the development of these actions and also the necessary and indispensable participation and involvement with parents and community. 3) Curriculum Development and Teaching-Learning 4) School Organization 5) Internal and community relations
Orientador Educacional	Graduates in pedagogy, qualified in educational guidance. Holders of diplomas or certificates of educational guidance obtained in postgraduate courses.	Primarily responsible for the personal development of each student, supporting his training as a citizen, reflecting on moral and ethical values and resolving conflicts. Alongside the teacher, this professional cares for the process of learning and training of the students through the aid to the teacher in the understanding of the behaviors of the children. That is: while the teacher is engaged in fulfilling the disciplinary curriculum, the educational advisor is concerned with attitudinal content, the so-called hidden curriculum. In it, there are aspects that children learn in school in an explicit way: values and the construction of interpersonal relationships.

Source: own elaboration based on MINAS GERAIS (2011), SEE-MG, RESOLUÇÃO SEE N.º 1812, de 22 de março de 2011, Resolução SEE/MG no 2.034/212, Resolução SEE/MG no 2.253/13, [Lei nº 5.564, de 21 de dezembro de 1968](#)

Annex Table 4: Interview Guideline

To principals	
<i>I would like to start with some more general questions about you and your work as a principal in this school:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When have you start working as a principal? - When were you assigned as principal in this school? - Are you also involved in teaching activities? - In how many (other) schools do you work?
1. Professional role/tasks	Could you describe your work as a principal in this school? / how your daily work look likes?
	Main tasks you carry out as a principal in this school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amongst these, which ones you give priority to?/which activities do you feel more responsible for? → For instance, do you feel you are more involved in instructional activities or administrative/management ones? (If working as a principal since years): Has it always been like this or has it changed?
	What is expected from you as a principal?
	Is there any difficulty you encounter in your daily work? → (If working as a principal since years): Has it always been like this or has it changed? → What would you say this is mainly due to? [→ try to identify major causes and motivational factors i.e pay, staff relationships, policy reforms, home/school balance/workload/stress/societal responsibility etc.] → Is there a specific time of the year where you feel more stressed/difficulties?
	Do you feel that the school context and conditions play any role in this/in how you experience your daily work?
	Personally, what skills, experience, capacities are important for you when carrying out your current role as a principal in this school?
	Have you undergone any professional training before being assigned as a principal? If so, Has it been useful/support you in development and acquisition of the abovementioned capacities? In what ways? [→ Try to also identify from whom the training was given and what the core content was]
2. Leadership and school management/climate	<i>Now thinking more broadly about the environment and climate in this school...</i> Are you the only leader of the school or is there also a management team? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you collaborate?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who decides over school's pedagogical, financial and managerial aspects?
	Do you feel you have some major responsibilities as a school leader in this school?
	<p>How are decisions taken in this school? (Who initiates and who carries them out?)</p> <p>→ Do you delegate your tasks to anyone else? Would you responsabilize any teacher for them? If so, to specific ones or to all of them and on what basis? (i.e teacher experience/trusting relationship...?)</p> <p>→ Do you consult any other on how to manage the school, how to improve teaching and learning, on policy matters etc? Do teachers give you any useful suggestion on these matters?</p>
	Do you give teachers clear directions, goals and expectation? And do you feel teachers in general follow you example and your suggestions?
	<p><i>In terms of school climate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How would you describe the relationship amongst the staff in this school? (Identify if sense of community/support/professional and intellectual stimulation - collaboration vs. competition etc.) - Does this environment you work in, support or challenges your work? <p>Is there a shared vision amongst staff?</p> <p>Do you feel teachers in this school are in general motivated/satisfied?</p> <p>→ Do you feel you have a role in influencing teacher's work/satisfaction? If so, in what ways? (ie. through communicating/sharing/leading as example ? etc.)</p>
3. Educational climate and reforms	<p><i>Now thinking about the current educational climate in the country...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How would you describe it? What are the major challenges you see? - Is there any reform /policy that is most debated and that has majorly affected the work in this school? [→ see if any standardized tests or accountability policies are mentioned].
	Thinking about this specific school, what are the necessary resources available to address the educational requirement/reform changes...? What is missing?/what major difficulties do you encounter? → Identify nature of challenges (i.e economic/policy contingent/teacher's quality etc....).
4. Test-based accountability policies	
4.1 Standardize tests and data use	<p><i>[If not mentioned earlier...]</i> I know that in the last decades there have been some changes in educational reform regarding the implementation of standardized tests and políticas de responsabilização...</p>
	<p><i>For instance, I know that there is a test (Prova Brasil/SIMAVE) which students have to undertake...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you tell me more about it?/Explain to me how it works ? - Why is it being done, what is its purpose? - Does it have any specific value?/What importance does it have for you/for the school?
	<p>Do you feel any pressure for the achievement of specific school results?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From whom mainly do you feel this pressure comes from?//To whom do you feel more accountable/responsible to?
	<p>Do you feel you have to control/supervise teachers in doing their job, in achieving higher test results for the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think teachers have sufficient capacities/time to do so?
	<p>Do you feel the community has any role in the achievement of school results?</p> <p>Do you feel there is a shared educational responsibility?</p>
	<p>Have you ever struggled/felt a mismatch between what you would have wanted to do as a principal/your idea of your job and what you felt you were required to do to comply with external accountability demands? [check for values, professional motivations]</p> <p>→ (If any contrasting pressure is mentioned) how have you addressed it, managed it? What strategies do you adopt to navigate these pressures?</p>
	<p>Have these types of tests changed in any way your work/the organization of the school?</p> <p>[Check for Increase in workload/tasks/stress?/instructional vs. managerial/administrative, Curriculum, teaching practices? / Motivation, satisfaction, self-efficacy, professional identity/responsibility? / School organizational culture/environment/climate?]</p>
	<p><i>Once tests are carried out...</i> [look for expressive vs. instrumental responses - managerial vs. instructional leadership style]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are the data used? (i.e to improve teaching and learning/improve school ranking/to comply with accountability demands)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it useful to inform about the educational quality? / to improve teaching and learning? → If not, which tools/what would be more useful to inform about the state of education or improve teaching and learning? - Do you communicate results to teachers? How?
4.2 Accountability policies (If still not talked about)	<i>Regarding IDEB ranking of school</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impressions, first thoughts... - → Is it useful? - How is it perceived in this school? - Is it important to increase school results in IDEB? Why?
	<u>External monetary incentives</u> : Do you feel the bonuses are a good measure of teacher's work/ of school's educational quality and stimulate to improve?
5. Teacher's SAWA receptance	How did and do teachers receive/perceive these tests / or accountability policies attached to it? → Do you feel/remember if there has there been any resistance/complaint about it? [Identify what specific part of the policy – if bonus/informative/teaching to the test etc.].
	Do teachers, as far as you know/remember feel more or less satisfied now with these accountability reforms? And why?
	Do teachers know what is expected from them? Are they adequately prepared?
	What do you think positively influences teacher's work? (i.e to reduce stress/increase motivation etc.)
6. Finally...	Overall, how would you define your job as a principal here? Do you feel you are overall satisfied? → What and how could they be improved? What would you tell policy makers to do differently if you could?

Annex Table 5: Coding list

Individual attributes	Age
	Sex
	Position in school
	Subject taught (teacher in class evaluated/non evaluated)
	Political affiliation
	Labor union affiliation
	Ideological position
Professional identity and status	Professional characteristics
	Background
	Training
	Time in service
	Type of contract (<i>efeitivo vs. efetivado</i>)
	Teacher rotation/Continuity in school
Tasks	Administrative task
	Instructional task
	Pedagogical task
	Task preferences
	Change in task/practice
Pedagogical style/discourse	Traditional
	Progressive
Public servant's working conditions	Workload
	Career advancement
	Salary
Professional training	Content of training
	Continuous formation
	Value of training (i.e adequate, non-adequate)
School/Policy dialogue	Involvement in decision making
	Teacher's politicization
	Teacher labor unions
	Policy support (perception of)/trust in policy processes

Subjective identity	Perception of own role/work
	Role expectations
	Organizational commitment
	Job satisfaction
	Sense of belonging
	Teacher capacity
	Teacher self-efficacy
	Professionalism vs. managerialism
School climate	Collegial relations
	Relationship with members of management team
	Trust in members of management team
	Relationship with teachers
	Trust in teachers
	Power relations
	Teacher competition
	Perception of principal leadership style
	Perception of management team leadership style
	Teacher-student relationship
	Trust in students
	Expectations on students
Leadership	Strategies adopted for school problems
	Strategies adopted to respond to accountability demands
	Principal's leadership practice/style
	Ethicality and equity
	Human and relational capacity
	Creation of instructional structures (i.e. instructional/pedagogical plan, professional development, teacher instruction, pedagogical exchange)
	Creation of collaborative/democratic structures (support, dialogue, involvement in decision making, empowerment)
	Management team's leadership style
	Distributed leadership/informal leadership
	Collaborative leadership
External test	Centrality/importance of test and consequences
	Purpose of the test (i.e. diagnostic, parental choice, creation of public policies)
	Motivations for adoption of test
	Value of the test
	Use of test results (i.e. for student preparation/class planning)
	Discussion of test results
	Strategies used for test preparation (i.e. teaching to the test, simulations, external trainings, class planning on the basis of test content)
	Opportunistic behaviors (i.e. cheating, student selection)
	Undesired effects (i.e. narrowing of the curriculum)
	Change in pedagogical/teaching practices (i.e. test friendly evaluations, adaptation of curricular content)
	Change in professional identity (<i>performativity</i>)
	Curriculum alignment
	Nature of evaluation (Qualitative/Quantitative; formative/assessive)
	Value of student evaluation
Accountability mechanisms	External accountability
	Internal accountability
	Professional accountability
	Bureaucratic accountability
	Managerial accountability
	High-stake accountability
	Low stake accountability

	Teacher evaluation
	Content-based accountability
	Content relevance
	Agent of accountability (i.e. government, principal, parents)
	Value of accountability mechanisms (i.e. relevance, fairness, reliability)
	Focus of responsibility (i.e. shared with community/within schools/ only on teachers/principal)
	Identification of consequences
	Stress/pressure
	Change in professional identity
	Reputational/material consequences
Contingent factors	Student SES
	School's geographical location
	School administrative dependence
	School resources
	School spaces
	Infrastructure
	School size
	Student discipline
Other factors and variables	Educational context
	Educational change
	Attitude towards educational problems and change (i.e. resistance, acceptance)
	Value of education (Instrumental, Intrinsic, positional)
	Standardization (of curriculum/pedagogical model/teaching style)
	Social factors (i.e. technology, quality of life style, gender roles, familiar structure, time)
	Political factors/climate