Policies of Accountability in Portugal

Portekiz'de Sorumluluk Politikaları

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Abstract

This communication stems from the global/local method proposed by Pinar (2006) for analysing changes that have affected curricular development in Portugal in the globalised context. It is argued that the most evident effects of globalisation on current curricular changes relate to homogenisation and standardisation (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), intersected by key concepts, such as *accountability*, good practices, quality, efficiency, evaluation and testing, amongst others, even though heterogeneity of practices persists. In Portugal, the political agenda has suffered a two-fold pressure – on one side, from globalisation and trans-nationalisation and, on the other, the trend to Europeanise educational policies – leading to processes of curricular re-centralisation and a performance-oriented culture in schools (Ball, 2004). The concept of accountability is seen as one of the central aspects for understanding this, so this text uses a series of reflective questions, organised in three regulatory dimensions - political, institutional and pedagogical - to analyse the concept of *accountability*.

Key words: Curriculum, globalisation, accountability, regulation

Öz

Bu çalışma, Pınar'ın (2006) küreselleşme bağlamı içersinde Portekiz'de eğitimde program geliştirmeyi etkileyen değişimleri analiz etmek için önerdiği küresel/yerel yöntemden yola çıkılarak hazırlanmıştır. Küreselleşmenin mevcut eğitim programlarının değişimler üzerindeki en belirgin etkilerinin, uygulamaların heterojenliği devam etmesine rağmen, homojenleşme ve standartlaşma bağlantısı olduğu (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), ve bunların diğerlerinin yanı sıra sorumluluk, iyi uygulama, kalite, etkinlik, ölçme ve değerlendirme gibi anahtar kavramlarla kesişmediği öne sürülebilir. Portekiz'de, politik gündem iki taraflı bir baskıya maruz kalmaktadır –bir yanda, küreselleşme ve ulusötelesileşme ve diğer taraftan eğitim politikalarının Avrupalılaştırılması –ve bu baskılar müfredatın merkezinin değişmesine ve okullarda performans merkezli bir kültürün yerleşmesine neden olmaktadır (Ball, 2004). Sorumluluk kavramı bahsi geçen gelişmeleri anlamanın temel unsurlarından biri olarak görülmektedir, bu yüzden bu çalışma, sorumluluk kavramını incelemek için politik, kurumsal ve pedagojik olmak üzere üç düzenleyici boyutta düzenlenmiş bir dizi aksettirici soruyu kullanmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Eğitim programı, küreselleşme, sorumluluk, düzenleme

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Introduction

In the present text it is intended to reflect about the principal international and national changes that have affected curricular development in Portugal in the globalised context. For this it is proposed to resort to the global/local method suggested by Pinar (2006). This method, which can be understood as part of a perspective which is opposed to hegemonic globalization (Sousa-Santos, 2004) through the internationalization of curriculum studies, proposes that educational realities be framed both attending to the global reality, and in their local contexts, considering the global influences on the local contexts and the ways in which globally structured concepts are locally (re)appropriated and translated. Therefore, as *currere*, it encompasses an iterative curricular analysis between the macro and the micro contexts.

It is assumed that various key concepts - defined and disseminated in a trans-national and supra-national context - have taken on a special relevance for an understanding of these changes. The concept of *accountability* is widely known today as being fundamental to these policies, in general, and to education and training, in particular.

Given the diversity of references that can be called upon for a study of the implications of these concepts in the conception and development of the curriculum, it is intended to present a series of reflections and questions, which contribute to the proposal for a referential model of analysis concerning the processes of political, institutional and pedagogical regulation. The text discusses three key points: globalisation and *accountability*; the Portuguese context; and political, institutional and pedagogical regulation.

Globalisation and Accountability

The global/local method proposed by Pinar (2006) is based on an analysis of the influences and situation at the global level and the way how these are perceived and translated into the national/local context. Thus, the characterisation of curricular policies in accordance with this method requires the study of the trans-national process of curricular regulation, as well as of the practices at the global and national/local levels.

This process takes into account that "studying the academic field of curricular studies locally and globally (…) can permit academics to strengthen and make more sophisticated their critical and intellectual distance in relation to their respective local cultures and the processes of standardisation inherent in globalisation against which numerous national cultures are now reacting strongly" (Ibid, p. 163).

This method of analysis permits the clarification of the concept of globalisation that is used in this article. The authors are in favour of a wide concept, which is not restricted to its economic aspects but rather recognises its effects in more varied spheres - namely, the social, political, scientific and technological, amongst others - with obvious impacts on the everyday life of every citizen.

In this sense, it matters right away to assume that globalisation, while the "new utopia" of many cosmopolitans, has not had the same range, nor advanced at the same rate, nor produced the same effects at the level of the different regions of the world, as well as the aspects that have been integrated (Morgado, 2009, p. 39). Globalisation is a heterogeneous phenomenon, which expresses itself by the fact it embraces not only the hegemonic and *top-down* processes but also *bottom-up*, counter-hegemonic processes, translations and re-interpretations at the level of local contexts, which are aspects that – on the whole - contribute to the growth of their complexity.

At the curricular and educational level, globalisation can be understood as a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon resulting, on the one hand in its most evident form, as homogenisation and standardisation (Anderson-Levitt, 2008) and, on the other hand, by the persistence of diversity at the level of pedagogical practices and by the re-affirmation of regional identities in the curriculum.

The homogenisation, which occurs at the level of discourses and policies, is operated through trans-nationally produced, disseminated and affirmed key concepts. Various trans-national organisations take on relevance in this process, among which one can emphasise the OCDE, World Bank and the European Union. These institutions have conveyed various concepts, which have impacted strongly at the level of curricular policy in many countries, such as good practices, quality, efficiency, efficacy, evaluation, testing and, above all, the concept of *accountability*, which is believed to have assumed a central role.

The concept of accountability has only recently been introduced in the European Union, having become a common word in the guiding documents and political discourses on education. In its origin, it is related to other concepts such as democratic governance, efficacy and participation, and is presented as a necessary element for the achievement of democratic governance (Afonso, 2012).

Several practices have concurred for the importance of accountability in educational contexts of the European union, such as The Open Method of Coordination which presupposes peer pressure mechanisms as a source of regulation of national policies which in practice, relies on accountability processes based on international assessment (including, for PISA – Program for International Student Assessment).

We understand accountability as a process of regulation based on the results accomplished by the implementation of decentralized educational practices. Therefore, we consider that it is supported, on the one hand, in external or international assessment of results, and on the other hand on the dissemination of those results and consequent holding the educational agents included in educational semi-markets responsible. In this sense, a recentralization of educational practices is operated through accountability, not at the level of principles, but rather of the ends and consequences, by holding the educational actors responsible.

The political discourse which has accompanied the dissemination of this concept is sustained by ideas of democratization – appealing to the participation and responsibility of educational actors in order to promote at the local level the resolution of problems and deficits afflicting public education – and of quality promotion. When perceived this way, it is a positive idea as it contributes to challenge the «self centered nature and complacency characteristic to many educational bureaucracies» (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 106).

Yet, it is also true that accountability may become a powerful instrument of control and regulation of teachers' practices, not always leading to the achievement of the quality it seeks to foster. Hargreaves (2003) stresses that the standardized assessment of all domains of the teaching activity (which has been promoted under the flag of accountability) has led teachers to an «infernal cycle of pressures and contradictory expectations» (p. 115) imposing a focus on quick fixes rather than on long term sustainable solutions. In this way, «teachers are increasingly concerned with preparing their students for the standardized tests, rather than promoting deep learning» (Idem). On the other hand he also questions the concepts of success and of quality in which our actions are based as their definition will profoundly impact the nature of the evaluated outcomes and of the practiced promoted.

Thus, despite the fact that it is anchored on ideas of democracy and participation, the concept of accountability has frequently led to a dictatorship by results and a culture of performativity (Ball, 2004), as we will stress later on. According to Afonso (2012), in practical terms the punitive aspect of accountability has been accentuated, which has led to the negative and stigmatizing connotation of the concept[**]. With respect to the concept of *accountability*, Afonso (2010) based on Schedler (1999) recognises

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[**] In Portugal, the concept of accreditation is concerned with the external evaluation of higher education programs, and their assessment and endorsement by an instituion constituted by request of the Ministery of Education and Science. This evaluation is done *a prior* to the functioning of such programs, as it is necessary for theyr aproval. It is tehrefore differentiated from accountability as this concept is essentially directed at the community (rather than at an accreditation agency) and incides on the resuls accomplished during a program's implementation.

three aspects as the basis on which it is structured: i) an informative aspect; ii) an explanative aspect; and iii) an authoritative aspect. Although the author (Afonso, 2010) highlights the importance of the first two aspects as modellers of what is commonly known as *accountability*, what is most noticeable is that it is the last aspect that can be taken into consideration as imposition, coercion and sanction, which determines most vehemently the impact of this concept at the level of the regulation of curricular practices. Through the binomial autonomy/accountability, it moves from the regulation of a previous plan of action to a posterior action plan, which permits one to verify that a regulation of the process follows a regulation by results.

The authors agree with Taubman (2009, p. 13), when he mentions that the changes underway affect each one of the aspects of school life and thinking about education:

> "(…) none of us, who teach, (…) are immune from the effects of the transformation that is taking place. It reaches the corners of our practices, constrains our daily life in schools and influences the way that we think about what we do in our classroom. It dictates the way how we spend at least a part of our professional time, how our work is evaluated and how we determine the significance of our work."

Control by results obtained contributes decisively to the installation of an auditing (Idem) or performativity (Ball, 2004) culture at the heart of educational contexts with profound effects at the level of teaching practices, which open the door for the entrance of a corporate culture in schools and in the curriculum. This is a pragmatic vision of education that leads to the "nightmare that is the present" (Pinar, 2007, p. 13), when public education is determined by the pragmatism of measurable results and "the school quits being a school and starts becoming a business" (Ibid, p. 27).

The Portuguese Context

Returning to the global/local method (Pinar, 2006) and setting the analysis in its Portuguese educational context, it is important to remember that these concepts are being appropriated and re-configured at the national level. It is in this order of ideas that Teodoro (2010) and Ball (2004) emphasise that global policies are used by national governments not only as policies that determine and impose a particular course of action but also as an external legitimisation of the policies internally pursued.

As a semi-peripheral country, Portugal is particularly subject to the homogenising effects of globalisation, more still when it finds itself under the effect of a double agenda – on the one side is a global agenda delineated by the above-mentioned trans-national organisations and on the other the more direct effect of an European agenda. In this sense, Dale (2004) refers to a globally structured agenda as the process by which national governments are lead to adopt globally delineated concepts as national educational priorities. In the specific case of the European Union it promotes the Open Co-operation Method, which circumvents the statutory limitations of the union, thus permitting the promotion of educational policies by means of the peer pressure exercised among the countries that are involved. International evaluation and testing take on - in this context - a fundamental role of enabling comparisons between educational systems, curricular policies and the results obtained.

In this way the Europeanisation of educational policies can be seen (Pacheco & Seabra, 2013) to lead to processes of curricular re-centralisation in schools that are visible through a framework of the evaluation of learning, of teachers and of schools, which are strongly inter-related. The concept of *accountability*, which has permeated these changes, is understood as one of the central explanatory aspects for its comprehension.

One particular example of the impact of the European Union in the field of educational policies is evident at the level of Higher Education. Here the Bologna Process sets out a series of curricular directives conducive to the construction of a European curricular territory. Although advertised as being based more on referentials of organisational structure (ECTS) than on the standardisation of content, it

will finish by "legitimating an international school knowledge that represents not only the aims that (…) each nation fulfils within the Framework of the European Community" (Morgado, 2009, p. 49) but also the interests of certain influential sectors and dominant social groups, which are the driving forces in this context. Furthermore, these forces will also contribute to the weakening of the national, regional and local curricular content (Pacheco & Vieira, 2006).

In this way and based on a rhetoric of European competitiveness in international markets, namely when one refers to an economy of knowledge, the European curricular discourses have found a response at several levels in the Portuguese educational context.

The effects of the double agenda - global and European – on Portuguese educational and curricular policies has expressed itself - at the very least - in three aspects: i) the option for a connective specialisation of knowledge; ii) the curricular valuing of the "key" subjects, which is visible through the reinforcement of curricular control, and iii) the definition of curricular policies oriented towards the learning results (Figure 1).

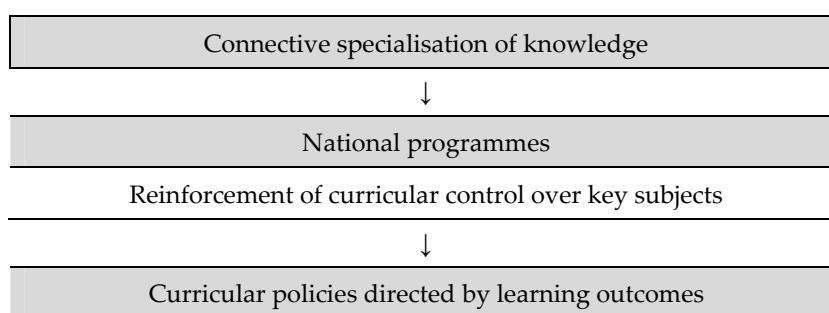| Connective specialisation of knowledge |
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| National programmes |
| Reinforcement of curricular control over key subjects |
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| Curricular policies directed by learning outcomes |

Figure 1. Globalisation and the Curriculum

With respect to the first aspect, Young (2010) would differentiate between the insular specialisation of knowledge – by referring to a specific organisation of the curriculum by subjects – and a connective specialisation of knowledge, which embraces trans-disciplinary areas, or the curricular organization by competencies. The same author argues that this last point implies a dissociation between knowledge and content, side by side with a tendency for the valuing of practical knowledge and know how, usually conducive to a commodification of knowledge (Pacheco & Seabra, 2013).

In relation to the second aspect, this has revealed itself as a progressive regression to the *core curriculum* expressed by the valuing of certain disciplines such as Portuguese Language and Mathematics, thus reinforcing the centrality of knowledge considered as academic to the detriment of knowledge that would favour the social, moral, aesthetic and political purposes of human action. Curricular control also strengthens the subjects considered as key ones, specifically through the extension of national exams and intermediate testing and even through the promotion of specific programmes that define the very particular way of teaching these disciplines. This curricular control is, as we have seen, focused on national external evaluation of learning outcomes, thus leading to the implementation of accountability.

In this context, international testing, namely the PISA, also plays an important role, as it establishes a ranking based on the results of mathematics, mother tongue and sciences obtained in several countries, which also contributes to the concentration on a *core curriculum*, thus ignoring the fact that the curriculum does not only contain these disciplines but also the situational aspects and the personal and subjective implications, which shape them. These international tests thus lead to the tendency for competitiveness between countries in the educational context and to homogenisation of practices, in so far as it leads to the attempt to imitate the *good practices* of the countries considered as models.

Finally, the third aspect has been revealed recently by the changing from a curriculum organized by objectives to one organised by competencies and, latterly, by a definition of *learning outcomes* that are oriented towards pedagogical action in the sense of regulation by products and evaluation. This focus on evaluation, associated with accountability, which teachers are subjected to, leads the authors to suggest a reflection around the following question: who defines what students learn?

These practices and concepts have been relatively little contested and appear to have been in large measure implicitly absorbed by academics, teachers and by the community in an uncritical way, thus leading to an internalisation of the political discourse associated with productivist practices. The authors suggest two reasons that will help with the understanding of this fact. First, is the fact that teachers and schools will be progressively compelled to give accounts about the results of the students, which falls within a culture of *accountability*. Second, the professional insecurity of the teachers, whose career has become uncertain, thus creating a feeling of fear for the future and a resulting necessity to highlight the work produced. The evaluation of schools, teachers, and students are deeply intertwined, leading to a situation where teachers evaluation is influenced by school evaluation and student evaluation, and determines the teachers' possibilities of career progression. This performativity culture (Ball, 2004), which requires teachers to invest more time and effort on bureaucratic matters and to show the results of the work that they do rather than the invisible work in the classroom ends up by legitimising the assumptions that the authors have been highlighting throughout this text.

Political, institutional and pedagogical regulation

For an analysis of the concept of *accountability* a series of reflective questions is proposed and it is organised around three dimensions – political regulation, institutional regulation and pedagogical regulation These dimensions are taken as the point of departure for the proposal of a reference for analysis of the current circumstances and they are based on the classification of Goodlad (1992), as well as the contexts of changes proposed by Goodson (2008).

It should be clarified that the concept of accountability in the sense of the rendering of accounts (through evaluation) and holding of teachers responsible for results (Afonso, 2010), whether framed in neo-liberal policies (Pacheco, 2001) or in regulatory processes (Barroso, 2006) or even in cycles of policy production (Ball, 1990), as well as the educational (Ozga, 2000) and curricular (Pacheco, 2003) study of the policies of *accountability*, is one of the visible faces of globalisation (Liptoveski & Serroy, 2010; Moreira, Pacheco & Morgado, 2007; Ritz, 2007; Gough, 2004; 2003; Pinar, 2003) and of its incorporated concepts, for example, *standards,* criteria, quality, efficiency and efficacy. Focusing on evaluation and results which may be subject to evaluation has led to a tendency to overvalue results. Accountability is visible in the Portuguese context mostly concerning the pillar of evaluation (of students results, of teachers and of schools, as we have seen), and the pillar of accounts giving – increasingly comprising multi-accountability, as schools are accountable not only towards the government, but also to local administrations, the educational community, parents, and other stakeholders (Eurydice, 2007, in. Afonso, 2012), but not so clearly towards the pillar of responsibilization, as there is no clearly defined orientation of what quality should be attained and by which processes (Afonso, 2012). It is by the aspect of conceptual change at the level of the trans-national bodies and political decision-making at the level of the governmental structure that globalisation forms and processes a broader context curricular homogenisation, that is to say, of "similarity at the world level" (Anderson-Levitt (2008, p. 364) with specific references to strategic action documents aimed at efficiency, choice and meritocracy (Welner & Oakes, 2008). For this reason, regulation pursues a productivist aspect marked by interests of the *global culture of the market* (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2010, p.41), where *standards* and *accountability* have become the twin towers of educational reform policies (Taubman, 2009).

This reality is the fruit of a globally structured agenda for education (Dale, 2004; Teodoro, 2010), which imposes a "zone of consensual silence" (Dale, 2004, p. 433) on the forms and processes of curricular standardisation, which leads to the conclusion that the school curriculum is more a "ritual activation of worldwide rules and conventions" rather than a choice of individual societies in the sense of fulfilling certain local conditions (Ibid, p. 435).

Institutional regulation elevates the organisational component, for example the management and administrative structures of schools, to a place of importance. According to Westbury (2008, p. 55), the changes introduced by "reforms do not happen in the central core of the system," which has the tendency to maintain itself unaltered but at the margins of this system, thus contributing to the idea that the regulation is done - above all - in the organisational aspects. In the same way, Tyack and Tobin (1994) argue that the reforms, as proposals for change, are themselves altered by the school regulations - given the effect of the organisational component that functions at institutional and instructional levels - thus accentuating the disconnection between change recommended in the discourses enunciated as the standards and changes in instructional practices and those which occur in the classroom and in the organisational practices of the school (Welner & Oakes, 2008).

 Certain purposes are inscribed in the agenda of such reforms, namely: the alteration of curricular practices (Gough, 2003), which are determined *generally* by the language of competencies to be brought about by learning outcomes (Pacheco, 2011); the standardisation of areas of instruction (Spring, 2007); the reinforcement of the national curriculum; and the measures for holding all the actors responsible. School external evaluation, included in the notion of decentralization and accountability, is now entering a new cycle of implementation in Portugal. The effects and impacts of the first cycle of external evaluation, which has evaluated all schools of the basic and secondary levels in the country are currently under research by a team of researchers, including the authors of this study. The results of this ongoing research project may help shed light on the complex processes by which accountability and external evaluation introduce change at the school level.

Lastly, pedagogical regulation These concepts (of which *accountability* is highlighted), in any respect cannot be dissociated from the idea of curriculum as a pedagogical discourse in the framework of a public policy of the State that is driven by equality, cohesion and social justice (Estevão, 2012).

If political regulation introduces homogenisation, pedagogical regulation is not independent of the practical structure with its informal rules, nor of what is "differing at the classroom level" (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p. 364), because "what actually happens in the classrooms differs in general throughout the world" (Ibid, p. 363). Therefore, homogenisation and curricular diversity are two faces of the same process that asserts itself at the level of educational and training policies, whether by political and institutional regulation or by pedagogical regulation with the first two being more centralised and circumscribed by standardised practices.

Dealing with globalisation at the level of the prescribed curriculum, it is at the classroom level and from local and individual experiences, which value identity/difference and reject a universal language (Connelly & Xu, 2008), that *cosmopolitan learning in the curriculum* gains space (Pacheco, 2012), that is to say, identity, difference and diversity (Pinar, 2009, 2010; Todd, 2009; Carson, 2009) in the context of the individual and the subjective. However, as we have seen, this space for freedom of action and decision by the teacher is subject to constraints at the higher levels of regulation. Even if what goes on in the classroom is not directly subject to scrutiny, the results of these activities are scrutinized.

Conclusion

Returning to the global/local method (Pinar, 2006) the authors started with an analysis of the global context, before focussing later on the Portuguese context, which, it is argued, has been subjected to two mandates – global and European. This double mandate has had impacts at various levels of which a connective specialisation of knowledge, the reinforcement of curricular control towards the key subjects and curricular policies oriented towards learning results are the visible effects. Evaluation is a fundamental pillar for these changes, as the centrality and increase of curriculum control concerning certain areas of the curriculum is heavily determined by evaluation (both national external evaluation, and international evaluation) of students results, and as the option for ways of curriculum organization of connective nature, favouring practical knowledge, such as competencies and learning outcomes , are placing emphasis on the ends rather than the objectives of education, and on results which are subject to evaluation. The mechanisms of control are thus shifted from the beginning of the process – What should we aim to do? – or the process - How should we accomplish such goals? – towards the results – What have we accomplished? This centrality of results is not clearly accompanied by a clear notion of direction and purpose. The concepts of quality, success and efficiency which are central to this rhetoric are not unequivocal. It is important to have clearly defined notions of what quality, and what results we should be attaining in order to prevent focusing, as Hargreaves (2003) has warned, mostly on superficial change then on sustained and long term improvement. Control has also been partially diffused, and accountability is increasingly directed not only towards the national government, but also local authorities, parents, and the community in general, which is relevant for the emergence of an education semi-market and competiveness among schools.

These mandates of supra-national origin have made themselves felt predominantly through the dissemination of key concepts that have been re-interpreted locally and permeate national educational policies. Although they have great potential for the promotion of profound changes in educational practices, these concepts (of which *accountability* is highlighted) have been received with a low level of opposition, which is an aspect the authors associate with a culture of fear and auditing with the result that these same concepts have become installed in schools. The interrelation between student evaluation, school evaluation and teacher evaluation, which is determinant for teachers' career advancement, may help to explain why contestation has been limited – in a highly competitive setting among colleagues, and in a scenario characterized by high teacher unemployment, teachers are compelled to focus on the activities which ensure they obtain the best possible evaluation, relegating other aspects to a secondary plane. This situation is clearly in line with what Ball (2003) refers to as a culture of performativity.

In view of the many questions that this reality summons up, it is proposed that a further analysis of the process of political, institutional and pedagogical regulation is essential for an analysis and understanding of the changes currently underway. The importation of key concepts crafted at a supernational level is essential, but must also be studied in context, and in relation with local and national forms of appropriation as it is not possible to speak of a global process of standardisation.

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Geniş Özet

Portekiz'de Sorumluluk Politikaları

Öncelikle, politik, ekonomik ve kültürel teoriler kapsamında (Ritzer, 2007), bilginin her alanında önemli oranda büyümenin izlendiği küreselleşme ile ilgili bilimsel literatür çerçevesinde, eğitim seviyesindeki gelişmeler ve süreçlerdeki değişimleri belirleyen büyük bir dosya bulunmaktadır. Küreselleşmenin tanımı hakkında farklı bakış açıları olduğundan bu değişimlerle ilgili bir uzlaşma olmaması da iyi olarak yorumlanabilir. Bu nedenle bu makalede Portekiz eğitim sistemiyle ilgili belirli örnekler verilerek, sunulan eğitim ve öğretim politikalarındaki kavramsal değişimlerin analizi ana hedef olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu değişimin anahtar kavramlarından biri de, hiç şüphesiz, eğitim programları uygulamaları ve program yapıcıları da içeren geniş bir sorumluluk mekanizması üzerindeki baskısı oldukça sert olarak hissedilen *sorumluluktur*. Diğer metinlerde, örneğin Taubman (2009)'da, bu kavram standardizasyon ve değerlendirme kültürü olmak üzere iki temel referans modelini baz alarak ulusötelesileştirilerek düzenlenmiş eğitim sistemleriyle market mantığına eşitlenmiştir.

Eğer farklılaşmanın eğitim sistemlerinin sabiti olduğu doğru olsaydı, ki eğitim sistemi için Comenius'un didaktik fikirlerinin yeniden düzenlenmesinin geniş kapsamlı bir homojenisasyona varacağına inanmak mümkün değildir, o zaman standartlaştırma ve değerlendirme küresel belirteçleri dayatan iki temel kriter görevi görürdü. Bu yolla, Pazar mantığının mevcut sorunlar için çözüm olacağına ve eğitimin finansal çıkarlar temelinde daha kolay düzenleniyor olmasının toplum çıkarına olduğuna inanmak cazip görünmektedir.

Eğitim ve öğretim kapsamında Avrupa politikalarının neler olduğu incelenirse, bu mantığın çeşitli hükümetlerin konudan konuya geçen tartışma yapıları içerisinde yer almasının yanı sıra gerginlik ve korkuya neden olan mekanizmalar vasıtasıyla eğitim aktörlerine, özellikle öğretmenlere, dayatıldıkları görülebilir.

Diğer metinleri takip ederek (Pacheco & Vieira, 2006; Pacheco, Morgado & Moreira, 2007), bu makale, küreselleşme bağlamında Portekiz'deki mevcut program gelişimlerini etkileyen ulusal ve uluslararası değişimleri analiz etmek için Pinar (2006) tarafından önerilen küresel/yerel metodun araçlarını kullanarak küreselleşme sorusuna eleştirel açılımlar getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Küreselleşmenin Portekizdeki mevcut program gelişimleri üzerindeki en belirgin etkilerinin, diğerlerinin yanı sıra hesap verme sorumluluğu (sorumluluk), iyi uygulama, kalite, etkinlik, fayda, ölçme ve değerlendirme gibi anahtar kavramlarla kesişen homojenleşme ve standartlaşma olduğu öne sürülebilir (Anderson-Levitt, 2008).

Taubman (2009) güncel değişmelerin okullardaki yaşamın durumunu ve eğitimle ilgili düşüncelerin her birini etkilediğinden bahsettiğinde diğer yazarlar da ona katılmaktadır. Portekiz'de politik gündem iki taraflı bir baskıya maruz kalmaktadır – bir yanda, küreselleşme ve ulusötelesileşme ve, diğer taraftan eğitim politikalarının Avrupalılaştırılması – ki bu baskılar programın merkezinin değişmesine ve okullarda performans merkezli bir kültürün yerleşmesine neden olmaktadır (Ball, 2007), okullarda öğrenme değerlendirmesinin çerçevesinde, profesyonel öğretmenlerin değerlendirmesi ve okulların değerlendirilmesi bu bağlamda birbirleriyle ilişkilidirler. Bu değişimlerin içinde yer alan sorumluluk kavramı tam olarak anlaşılması için kilit açıklayıcı faktörlerden biri olarak görülmektedir.

Sorumluluk kavramını incelemek için – politik düzenleme, kurumsal düzenleme ve pedogojik düzenleme olmak üzere üç boyutta düzenlenmiş, mevcut durumların analizi için referans noktası olacak bir önerinin çıkış noktası olabilecek bir grup yansıtıcı soru düzenlenmiştir.

Bu makalede sunulan fikirler kullanılarak amaçlanan, mümkünse diğer ülkelerle ilişkilendirilebilecek program uygulaması ve organizasyonu ile, sorumluluk ile - veya pazarın mantığıyla - ilgili politikaların gerçek etkisi hakkında ampirik, nicel ne nitel çalışmaların gelişimini destekleyecek daha geniş bir araştırmanın temeli olabilecek teorik bir çerçeve kurmaktır.