

## The weakening publicness and democracy of public education and growing intervention of non-state actors in education governance: the case of Denmark, France, and Portugal

**Sofia Viseu**, Universidade de Lisboa

**Luís Miguel Carvalho**, Universidade de Lisboa

**John Benedicto Krejsler**, Aarhus University

**Romuald Normand**, University of Strasbourg

*This article discusses how the increasing interventions of non-state actors in education governance are shaping democratic decision-making in public schools. We focus on the effects of these interventions in public schools in Denmark, France, and Portugal regarding the interconnected dimensions typically advocated by non-state actors: the use of international large-scale assessments, accountability, datafication and digitalization of education. Despite the different cultural traditions and historical trajectories in these three countries, the paper shows that the intervention of non-state actors is being reinforced and tends paradoxically to weaken publicness in schools.*

### 1. Introduction

This article explores how the increasing interventions of non-state actors in education governance are shaping and influencing decision-making in schools. By non-state actors, we refer to a diverse range of entities, including long-established international organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO, supranational organizations like the European Union, as well as newer actors such as edu-businesses, NGOs, think tanks, and philanthropic foundations (Edwards et al., 2021). Specifically, we will examine the effects of these interventions on public schools in Denmark, France, and Portugal in relation to 1) the use of international large-scale assessments, and 2) accountability, datafication and digitalization of education, as these interconnected dimensions are typically advocated by non-state actors (Lubienski et al., 2022).

These three countries were chosen as exemplary cases of visions for democratizing comprehensive school in contexts with different challenges: Denmark saw school as an integral part of developing the Nordic welfare state in a context long-dominated by social democrat policies; France regarded school as a guarantee of nation-making because of its 'laïcité' (secularism) ideal; Portugal saw school as an element integral to the democratization of a society struggling to reform after half a century under an authoritarian regime. From considerably different societal contexts, each of these European countries in their own way saw school as playing a central role in the democratizing project of the 1970s and 1980s; and in all three countries there followed a close association of public education with democracy, citizenship, welfare, and equal opportunities. However, in a consolidation period of democracy throughout Europe post-1989, this project no longer appears legitimate or capable of ensuring the common good; it seems ineffective at transmitting commitment to democracy, sustaining a vibrant public democratic space and reducing inequalities. We argue that the resulting criticism has opened the doors for non-state actors to increase their participation and influence in education governance.

Our central argument is twofold. First, we start with the observation that there is a growing presence of non-state actors in education governance, both globally and within Europe. For example, UNESCO's 2021/2 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report indicates that 171 out of 204 countries have adopted public-private partnerships in education (UNESCO, 2021). Second, while these actors encompass a wide range of organizational types and operate on multiple scales, their intervention in education governance has been analyzed both as a consequence of, and a contributing factor to, the growing centrality of international large-scale assessments, accountability, and privatization (Robertson et al., 2012). We understand these interventions as part of the global circulation of New Public Management (NPM) principles, coexisting with the expansion of school choice, the defense of private interests, managerialism in schools, the emphasis on evidence-based education, and the widespread use of international benchmarking of education systems (Hultqvist et al., 2018). Moreover, the contemporary context of crisis and uncertainty has accelerated and intensified the participation of non-state actors in decision-making processes aimed at addressing complex policy problems, in alignment with globalized education policy discourses (Rizvi et al., 2022). Thus, our focus is on what unites these actors:

a shared aim to influence both public policy and private decision-making in ways that promote adherence to their preferred educational topologies (Grimaldi & Ball, 2021).

Our analysis is driven by a central premise: although the involvement of non-state actors in education is intensifying, it simultaneously appears to undermine the notion of publicness in schooling. This premise is substantiated by the argument that educational agendas by non-state actors are increasingly marginalizing teachers, students, and communities in decision-making processes. Instead, the agendas they advance emphasize international large-scale assessments, top-down accountability mechanisms, datafication, and the digitalization of education as central tools of governance. Drawing on literature that examines transnational reforms in our three countries, we argue that the publicness of public education is increasingly being scrutinized due to the interventions of non-state actors.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the historical context surrounding the establishment and legitimization of public education in Denmark, France, and Portugal. It then highlights the current erosion of this legitimacy, discussing how times of uncertainty and (permanent) crisis are turning education into a patient in need of a cure, creating opportunities for privatization and the interventions of non-state actors.

In the next two sections, we examine the effects of these interventions on education in the three countries, focusing on the involvement of global political actors and non-state actors who predominantly operate on a national scale. The second section will focus on the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), selected due to its status as one of the most successful international large-scale assessments (Waldow & Steiner-Khamisi, 2019), and the OECD's increasing role as a significant global actor in education governance (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). The third section explores the intervention of non-state actors on a national scale. It discusses how these interventions are reshaping educational landscapes, blurring the lines between public and private spheres, and by the growing emphasis on the triad of accountability, datafication, and digitalization in education. Accountability will be addressed as part of the growing trend for datafication in education, which encompasses the quantification of education across various domains, including policymaking and educational practices (Grek et al., 2020). The paper also contends that accountability has been further intensified by the digitization of public education, involving the integration of digital tools and technologies to monitor, manage, and deliver education (Williamson, 2016).

The fourth and final section of the paper presents the discussion and final remarks on the implications of these non-state actors' interventions on the weakening publicness and democracy of public education.

## **2. The crisis of public education opening the doors to privatization and non-state actors' interventions**

### **2.1. Education as an affair of the State, supporting equality as a common good**

Despite different legacies, timelines and trajectories, the modern public education systems of Denmark, France, and Portugal are rooted in principles of equality, citizenship and the promotion of societal welfare, conceiving education as a common good. Thus, publicness in education has been closely associated with state governmentality, promoting secularism and an increasingly unified/comprehensive education stream (Derouet et al., 2015).

The first Danish school act promulgating compulsory education for all was instituted in 1814. Up until 1903, however, there were many forms of school catering to different social classes, as well as a rural-urban divide. In the climate of increasing extremism and polarization in the 1930s and the ensuing horrors of World War II, support grew for building a comprehensive school that was looked upon as a microcosm of society, i.e., a place where students learnt about democracy whilst simultaneously practicing democracy. From the 1960s, Reform Pedagogy (and other initiatives) took part in major political reforms and acts of social engineering to build welfare societies that would ensure better distribution of income and social equality; equal access to education was perceived as a key prerequisite for a well-functioning democracy (Krejsler & Moos, 2021). In the 1975 Act on the Folkeskole, the unified comprehensive primary and lower secondary school was enacted, finally securing in legal terms an unstreamed comprehensive school.

In France, since the 1880s public education has been intricately tied to the construction of the republican education system, as a response to challenges posed by the Catholic Church, royalist conservatives, and the local bourgeoisie. The founders of this system, aligned with socialist circles and the 'free thought' movement, championed Enlightenment ideals and emphasized the importance of literacy and numeracy in fostering emanci-

pation and civic engagement. Secularism emerged as a cornerstone principle, solidified by the 1905 Act separating Church and State, a value that remains central to contemporary education debates in France. Following World War II, the Langevin-Wallon Plan, inspired by the National Council of Resistance, envisioned a more egalitarian education system aimed at enabling upward social mobility for working-class children. Although never fully realized, this plan advocated for a free, secular, and compulsory education system with a common curriculum for students aged 11 to 15. Despite initial setbacks, elements of this reform agenda were gradually implemented, notably in 1975 under the right-wing minister René Haby. This period saw the establishment of the French comprehensive school or ‘collège unique’, symbolizing a shift towards greater inclusivity and democratization within the education system (Poucet & Prost, 2016).

The construction of the school system in Portugal was carried out under state control. Until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was marked by the exclusion, or at least prudent distancing, of local communities and powers (Nóvoa, 1998). This happens both in political-administrative decisions, reserved for the centralized state, and in pedagogical matters, reserved for teachers, under a tacit agreement that supported a bureaucratic-professional regulatory regime until the turn of the century (Barroso, 2003). The Portuguese education system has maintained the course of secularization and secularism to this day, even during the period of the Estado Novo (1932-1974), an authoritarian regime dominated by conservative values and with a Catholic affiliation, but in which the interest of the nation, represented by the State, prevailed above all else. The first comprehensive schooling project in Portugal legitimized by law was initiated in 1967 with the creation of the Preparatory Cycle of Secondary Education (unification of technical and lyceum schools, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades). However, this was a modest appearance, within the framework of a conservative and non-democratic regime (Carvalho, 2002). After the establishment of the democratic regime, the comprehensive project was energized by the creation of unified secondary education and with the extension of compulsory schooling to 9 years, offering the same curriculum to all students in 1986.

Despite concerted efforts, achieving equality and equity in access to education has proven problematic within the education systems of Denmark, France, and Portugal. Social stratification based on factors such as social class, ethnicity, and income has led to increasing inequalities among students, undermining the democratic ideals that underpinned comprehensive schooling and the welfare model of equitable rights (Duru-Bellat & Kieffer, 2000; Hansen, 2003; Nóvoa & Barroso 1999). Consequently, public education has come under heightened scrutiny for its perceived inefficiency and costliness, prompting these countries to adopt NPM and market-driven policies aimed at modernizing the public sector (Krejsler & Moos, 2023).

## 2.2. Non-state actors and times of uncertainty and new crises

The ongoing succession of crises (financial, environmental, health, populism, armed conflicts, and war) increased the complexity of policymaking (Kushnir, 2021), sparking new discussions about education to address emerging challenges. This is also accelerated and intensified by non-state actors, including global policymakers, in the public education arena.

In fact, since the mid-2010s, international organizations have increasingly emphasized the importance of addressing vulnerability and building resilience in the face of unexpected disasters or crises, highlighting the significance of diverse stakeholder participation and efforts in education as central components of effective long-term recovery (see for instance, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2017). This corresponds to the spread of social investment principles promoted by the OECD and the European Commission (Normand, 2021), which advocates innovative, bottom-up programs mixing public and private actors. In the same way and following the Covid-19 crisis, the European Commission created the NextGeneration initiative to support its members through national recovery and resilience plans as a key economic recovery instrument to benefit both public and private organizations. This crisis has also been viewed as an opportunity to initiate or advocate for education reforms (Cone & Brøgger, 2020) as the public health and financial crisis is added to others already present in education systems: the teaching profession, cyberbullying, school violence, school dropouts, segregation, and discrimination. Education seems to be perceived through its ‘pathologies’ - like a patient in need of a cure - rather than as a common good that can promote the well-being of future generations (Lingard, 2023) where the intervention of non-state actors is welcome. In fact, in our three countries, non-state actors are brought in by public authorities or present themselves in the public arena as committed to school improvement and social inclusion programs, providing “knowledge that works” or ready-to-use edtech solutions for these ‘pathologies’. We have found various manifestations of this phenomenon, involving both global political actors and private actors who predominantly operate on a national scale, as shown in the next sections.

### 3. International large-scale assessments: the OECD's PISA

In the early 2000s, Denmark, France, and Portugal began to converge in their use of transnational standards and international large-scale assessments in public policy, particularly the PISA survey, and to a lesser extent the IEA PIRLS-literacy and TIMSS-numeracy and science surveys. The primary aim was to highlight problems within the education systems and justify political interventions. In Denmark, interventions were focused on strengthening evaluation policies, while in Portugal and France, PISA was shown to reinforce retention and dropout rates policies.

The launch of the OECD's PISA in 2000 in Denmark confirmed the shock findings of the IEA's 1991 literacy survey, that Danish students performed considerably lower than their peers in neighboring Nordic and European countries, which did not match the self-perception of a progressive and equity-oriented world-class school system (Krejsler & Moos, 2023). Furthermore, a government-commissioned OECD country report on Danish comprehensive schools pointed out that they underperformed in relation to the massive resources spent, largely due to a poor evaluation culture. This report became instrumental to the introduction of ten national standardized tests in literacy, numeracy, science and English, which were closely connected to increased sensitivity to Denmark's poor performance in the PISA survey and looking at TIMSS and PIRLS (Ekholm et al., 2004). In fact, the OECD has had an unparalleled influence on Denmark's educational policies, by providing templates and policy advice that have transformed Danish primary and lower secondary education from a progressive, child-oriented system with substantial teacher autonomy to a standards-based education system with low-stakes testing and reduced teacher autonomy (Krejsler & Moos, 2021; Kelly et al., 2018). The findings of the PISA survey in France did not come as a shock as they had in Denmark (Normand, 2014). The survey was prepared at length by the Ministry of Education with the support of expert and working groups translating and adapting international and European standards from the OECD and the European Commission (Normand, 2022). In fact, the public debate, fueled by the media when the results were regularly published, did not give rise to controversies but rather reinforced a compromise with the French education research that the PISA survey was a good tool for measuring inequalities and conducting reforms, such as reducing retention and dropouts. Nevertheless, the PISA results were used to justify reforms for new national assessments and school indicators (Normand, 2020, 2023).

The initially difficult relationship between Portuguese policy actors and PISA (Afonso & Costa, 2009) made way from 2005 for an implicit acceptance of PISA data as a crucial indicator for legitimizing or delegitimizing policies. Fifteen years after the first survey, it has become clear that PISA is persistently used to justify the adoption of public policies and the enactment of OECD scripts on the meanings and processes for governing education (Carvalho et al, 2017); since 2016, under a center-left government, school policies in Portugal have embraced OECD narratives on literacy, quality, and equity, improvement-oriented school projects, along with a global concern for reducing retention and dropout rates, largely justified by PISA results and comparisons (Carvalho & Alves, 2023).

Despite different interpretations in national contexts, PISA is a successful instrument produced by a global political actor in these national policy arenas: it was used to build narratives around mediocre student performance and underperforming schools; it became a critical source for public policy that facilitated the adoption of OECD-prescribed scripts, calling for effectiveness, quality, and better outcomes; and increased external and public scrutiny on educators and schools.

### 4. Non-state actors and the triad of accountability, datafication and digitalization

Since the 1990s, NPM strategies have been introduced in education, reshaping the boundaries between welfare and education in Denmark, France, and Portugal. Despite these changes, direct funding and provision of education still come primarily from the State, underscoring its continuing significance in education provision in these countries. Nevertheless, within the triad of accountability, datafication, and digitalization, non-state actors' participation in education has been gaining ground on a national scale in these three countries through distinct, but sometimes overlapping, forms of supply: equipment, evidence, or solutions.

A first manifestation is the involvement of non-state actors as suppliers of equipment and technological resources, including donations, as seen in the Danish context with Microsoft donating iPads to schools. In France and Portugal, the participation of non-state actors has been associated with spearheading a digital



strategy for education. Within their national recovery and resilience plans, these two countries have contracted and acquired private services to supply equipment (as well as software, training, and resources for teachers) as part of the current public investment in digital education (Government of the French Republic, 2021; Portuguese Republic, 2021). However, in both these countries, digitalization appears to be strongly supervised by public education authorities. This supervision occurs either through defining specific pedagogical guidelines for schools and suppliers, as is the case in Portugal, or through the presence of an open-source culture and digital commons (such as software and data), supported by the Ministry of Education, to ensure sovereignty and prevent dependency on companies like Google, Apple, or Meta, as in the French case. In fact, in France fac-labs in schools and digital platforms are supervised by the public education service, notably through the local authorities and the state's Canopé network.

A second manifestation of the involvement of non-state actors through the triad of accountability, datafication, and digitalization is the design of monitoring systems that collect big data on students' and schools' performance (separate from PISA) or supply evidence about schools' performance.

It is important to note that in France and Portugal, the development of accountability in education owes much to public authorities, which centralize the information system and statistical production (see, for instance, Normand, 2016). However, in Portugal there is a renewed investment in contracting tech companies to design and implement digital solution to make schools more accountable through new and sophisticated external control mechanisms. This phenomenon has been characterized as accelerating digital bureaucracy (Lima, 2021; Gonçalves, 2022); there are currently about 40 platforms managed by the Ministry of Education to collect and process information on many aspects of school life, including staff, students, school provision, external assessment, and financial management. In France, however, even though the Ministry of Education calls on consultants to build information and data systems, its *Direction de l'Évaluation, de la Prospective et de la Performance* (Directorate of Assessment, Forecast and Performance) retains a monopoly on producing statistics and developing national assessments and indicators within the education system. However, creating an open data system is a way of disseminating this information to other public and private stakeholders, in the name of transparency and accountability, beyond the traditional actors in the field of education.

Other non-state actors have contributed to the production and introduction of big data into the public sphere, exemplified by the dissemination of school rankings by the media in Portugal and France (somewhat in contrast to Denmark). In Portugal, school rankings were notably introduced into the public discourse by the print media (Melo, 2009). Over the past 20 years, discussions on social media have largely revolved around issues such as student performance, retentions, dropouts, and, periodically but recurrently, school choice or PISA results. These discussions highlight the media's influence on framing policy dynamics and emphasizing certain educational issues, either with praise or criticism (Santos, 2022; Santos et al., 2022).

A third manifestation is the involvement of non-state actors in the public sphere as creators and providers of evidence-oriented policies or evidence-informed packages. Although these actors present themselves as providers of evidence-oriented policy, it is essential to consider the broader context in which this presentation occurs. Indeed, recent scholarship has emphasized the centrality of knowledge (not necessarily that produced within academia) in contemporary public policy (Grek, 2023). In the face of a crisis of political authority rooted in traditional status, knowledge is increasingly mobilized as a means to legitimize policy decisions and reinforce calls for reform. The most extensively studied and illustrative example of this phenomenon is the OECD's intervention through the development of PISA, as previously discussed. A common feature of the new non-state actors involved in public action - and a distinctive aspect of their *modus operandi* - is their "commitment to supporting, managing, producing, and disseminating data, forging new political relationships, and using knowledge to legitimize their engagement in the public sphere" (Ozga, 2009, p. 150). Our examples demonstrate the complexity of these phenomena.

Seeking to enhance the quality of education, public authorities in Denmark have adopted quantitative and evidence-oriented research paradigms and teacher education programs in educational courses, learning toolkits, textbooks, and expert counselling services (Krejsler & Moos, 2021). One such initiative involves dealing with behavioral and learning problems in a systemic child-family-institution setting, supplied to preschools and schools by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has acquired packages such as 'The Incredible Years' or 'School-Wide Positive Behavior Support-model' from private suppliers (idem).

Additionally, private companies and foundations are increasingly integrated into public education and educational research. For example, the Danish multinational company Lego and its Lego Foundation are actively collaborating with schools, municipalities, and educational researchers. Their 'Playful Learning' initiative funds Danish University Colleges, advancing agendas for effective learning, and developing toys and learning

materials globally (Cone & Moos, 2022; Krejsler & Moos, 2023). In their own way, each of these packages provided by private non-state actors challenges the professional discretion of teachers by providing pedagogies and approaches to organizing teaching that has not, for the most part, been developed in consultation with schools and teachers.

Similarly, in France and Portugal, while the public education sector remains dominant, there is increasing evidence of the growing presence of non-state actors who present themselves or are invited by public authorities to intervene in the education system. In France, the philanthropic sector in education is expanding, notably under the umbrella of the Fondation de France. Academic chairs are beginning to appear, particularly at ESSEC Business School, and new professions and consultants are engaging in public-private programs for children and adolescents (Maire, 2020). In the field of education and professional inclusion of young people, the AlphaOmega Foundation, the Bettencourt Schueller Foundation, and the Accenture Foundation have an increasingly significant role in supporting large-scale educational projects focused on developing soft skills and digital technologies, such as *Coup de Pouce*, *Entreprendre pour Apprendre*, *Écoles de la Deuxième Chance*, and *Espérance Banlieue*.

In Portugal, a similar phenomenon has been occurring since the mid-2000s, with the emergence and establishment of new think tanks, philanthropic foundations, and corporate philanthropy entities that engage with the education system to provide policy recommendations, new methodologies, best practices, and improvement-oriented programs focused on individual and organizational capacity building, as well as digital and social-emotional skills (see, for instance, Viseu & Carvalho, 2021; Carvalho & Viseu, 2024).

As shown in the three countries, despite maintaining strong ties with the public sector, the growth of accountability, datafication, and digitalization has gone hand in hand with the expansion of non-state actors' participation. This convergence is evident in their presence, intervention, or participation in three key domains: 1) providing infrastructure, which helps develop complex systems for pedagogical digitalization and digital control systems for the education sector; 2) supplying big data or evidence to make the systems, including schools and teachers, more transparent and accountable by highlighting unresolved issues; 3) offering solutions by identifying actions needed to address these problems.

## 5. Interpretation and final remarks

In this paper, we aimed to discuss how the increasing interventions of non-state actors in education governance are shaping democratic decision-making in public schools. To this end, we started by showing the similarities between Denmark, France and Portugal as well as the differences in their historical commitment to democratizing schooling and how the egalitarian approach led them to adopt the comprehensive school model. Public education emerged through an ongoing process of negotiation, and sometimes tensions, with religious and private interests, driven by the aspiration for a cohesive and democratic society. However, this egalitarian compromise came up against reforms in the '80s and '90s that redesigned the educational model. Gradually, changing mindsets accompanying the neo-liberal turn and NPM called for greater effectiveness, quality and outcomes, leading to the need for more accountability of the system and, simultaneously, private intervention was increasingly looked upon as useful and welcomed by public authorities.

Among other ILSAs, the OECD's PISA is a powerful example of the search for accountability and quality and the influence of a global policy actor in education. Indeed, it had significant effects on the adoption of national policies in the three countries, shaping national debates and diluting the public interest and capacity for self-restructuring of the public sphere around educational issues. Thus, publicness has been transformed into a demand for transparency and scrutiny and the involvement of other non-state actors, also on a national scale, has reinforced this trend. We have showed how in these three countries, and under the triad of accountability, datafication, and digitalization, non-state actors' interventions are targeted to support, design, or produce big data and evidence, namely in digital support, to feed and frame public debate. Since non-state actors' interventions are valued in the public sphere but conceived at the margins or even outside the education system, they tend to diminish democratic decision-making (Grek, 2023), by reducing the participation of schools' actors and amplifying their own.

However, it is important to note the existence of a certain opposition or resistance to this trend. For instance, around 2016, Denmark witnessed increasing criticism on the use of digital devices such as smartphones in school, the evaluation culture, and, more broadly, an economic and instrumentalist reform approach (Krejsler & Moos, 2023; Holloway & Hedegaard, 2021). Until recently in France and Portugal, the privatization and

marketization of education were less well received by public authorities, and teachers' sense of public service and professional ethics still seems to be dominant. Nevertheless, the pressure faced by schools and teachers and a certain instrumentalization of education contribute to the (further) erosion of the profession, and even of the sense of their public action (Aabro, 2016; Eryaman & Schneider, 2017; Flores, 2023).

We would like to highlight that an important aspect of understanding the changing conditions for school and education: it relates to the forming of subjectivities about and by the students. Our analyses and discussions in this article point to an important meta-aspect that may well have been crucial in undermining the formation of a well-informed citizenry. The positioning of schools as accountable units has fostered a consumerist attitude among students and parents, as they are encouraged to choose the educational option, they believe best optimizes the student's human capital and life aspirations (see, for example, Lolle & Rasmussen, 2022).

Moreover, the pursuit of local democracy is becoming difficult to exercise due to the external identification and imposition of problems and solutions by non-state actors or by political-administrative elites in alliance with these actors (see, for example, Lyon et al., 2021; Martins & Viseu, 2024; Olmedo, 2018).

In the case of post-war Denmark, school was viewed as ideally being a microcosm of society, where students from different social and ethnic backgrounds met and took an interest in getting to know each other, collaborating and solving problems together. Students, teachers and parents were framed as being part of a collaborative endeavor with considerable impact on the future of Denmark, i.e., encouraged to act as responsible citizens (Holloway & Hedegaard, 2021). In France and Portugal, accountability and datafication are developing in the shadow of the State, integrating de facto and endogenously the methods and epistemology of large-scale assessments and evidence-based education, and imposing a vision of performance on professional groups and trade unions, in relative ignorance of the voices of local actors (see, for example, European Educational Research Journal Special Issue on accountability policy by Barbana et al., 2020).

In the name of equal opportunity, partnership schemes with non-state actors are sometimes developed (philanthropy, edu-business, foundations), bypassing the historical associations that worked with the State, particularly in the field of social inclusion and the care of so-called "at-risk" students. The result is an endogenous privatization of the public education service, marginalizing the relationships built up with trade unions and educational associations in the days of the comprehensive school system (Stoleroff, 2007; Wiborg & Larsen, 2017; Dumay et al., 2024).

The changes occurring in the three countries examined in this article appear to have significantly undermined trust in the public good and democracy. This is primarily because these qualities have largely been replaced by attention on optimizing one's human capital, by students and parents as well as national governments increasingly attentive to their place in transnational rankings for the sake of future prosperity, and motivated by the fear of falling behind.

This work was supported by National Funds through FCT-Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P., under the scope of UIDEF - Unidade de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Educação e Formação, UIDB/04107/2020, <https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04107/2020>.

## References

- Aabro, C. (2016). *Koncepter i pædagogisk arbejde*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Afonso, N., & Costa, E. (2009). A influência do Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) na decisão política em Portugal: o caso das políticas educativas do XVII Governo Constitucional Português. *Sísifo. Revista de Ciências da Educação*, 10, 53-64.
- Barbana, S., Dumay, X., & Dupriez, V. (2020). Accountability policy forms in European education systems: An introduction. *European Educational Research Journal*, 19(2), 99-104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904120907252>
- Barroso, J. (2003). Organização e regulação dos ensinós básico e secundário, em Portugal: sentidos de uma evolução. *Educação & Sociedade*, 24(82), 63-92. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-73302003000100004>
- Carvalho, L. M. (2002). *A Oficina do Coletivo*. Educa.
- Carvalho, L. M., & Alves, N. (2023). *Regulação, autonomia e accountability em educação*. UIDEF Research Syntheses: 2020-2023. Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa.
- Carvalho, L. M., & Viseu, S. (2024). New philanthropy and education governance in Portugal: fabricating social inclusion as policy, knowledge and practice. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 45(1), 146-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2023.2273957>
- Carvalho, L. M., Costa, E., & Gonçalves, C. (2017). Fifteen years looking at the mirror: On the presence of PISA in education policy processes (Portugal, 2000-2016). *European Journal of Education*, 52(2), 154-166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12210>
- Cone, L., & Brøgger, K. (2020). Soft privatisation: mapping an emerging field of European education governance. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 18(4), 374-390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1732194>

- Cone, L., & Moos, L. (2022). Mapping commercial interests and imaginaries in Nordic education. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy (NordSTEP)*, 8(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2022.2045164>
- Derouet, J. L., Normand, R., & Pacheco, R. G. (2015). La modernización del sistema educativo en Francia: la nueva gestión pública entre la afirmación del Estado y la gobernanza descentralizada. *Educação & Sociedade*, 36(132), 723-741. <https://doi.org/10.1590/ES0101-73302015152583>
- Dumay, X., Bertron, C., Vêlu, A.-E., & Buisson-Fenet, H. (2024). The dualisation of teacher labour markets, employment trajectories and the state in France. *Work, Employment and Society*, 38(1), 134-152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221128681>
- Duru-Bellat, M., & Kieffer, A. (2000). Inequalities in educational opportunities in France: educational expansion, democratization or shifting barriers? *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(3), 333-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930050030464>
- Edwards, D. B., Caravaca, A., & Moschetti, M. C. (2021). Network governance and new philanthropy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Reconfiguration of the State. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(8), 18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.1990014>
- Ekholm, M., Mortimore, P., Maria, D.-E., Laukkanen, R., & Valijarvi, J. (2004). OECD-rapport om grundskolen i Danmark. Danish Department of Education.
- Eryaman, M. Y., & Schneider, B. (Eds.). (2017). *Evidence and Public Good in Educational Policy, Research and Practice*. Springer.
- Flores, M. A. (2023). Teacher education in times of crisis: Enhancing or deprofessionalising the teaching profession? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(2), 199-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2023.2210410>
- Gonçalves, C. (2022). *A regulação digital da educação sob o prisma dos instrumentos*. PhD Educação, Administração e Política Educacional. IE-ULisboa.
- Government of the French Republic (2021). *France Relance: Economic, social and ecological recovery plan*. [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/frances-recovery-and-resilience-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/frances-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en)
- Grek, S. (2023). *The New Production of Expert Knowledge: Education, Quantification and Utopia*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grek, S., Maroy, C., & Verger, A. (2020). Introduction: Accountability and datafication in education: Historical, transnational and conceptual perspectives. In S. Grek, C. Maroy, & A. Verger (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2021* (pp. 1-22). Routledge.
- Grimaldi, E., & Ball, S. J. (2021). Paradoxes of freedom. An archaeological analysis of educational online platform interfaces. *Critical Studies in Education*, 62(1), 114-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1861043>
- Hansen, E. J. (2003). *Uddannelsessystemer i sociologisk perspektiv*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Holloway, J., & Hedegaard, L. (2021). Democracy and teachers: the im/possibilities for pluralisation in evidence-based practice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 38(3), 432-451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2021.2014571>
- Hultqvist, E., Lindblad, S., & Popkewitz, T. S. (Eds.). (2018). *Critical Analyses of Educational Reforms in an Era of Transnational Governance*. Springer.
- Kelly, P., Andreasen, K. E., Kousholt, K., McNess, E., & Ydesen, C. (2018). Education governance and standardised tests in Denmark and England. *Journal of Education Policy*, 33(6), 739-758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1360518>
- Krejsler, J. B., & Moos, L. (Eds.). (2021). *What Works in Nordic School Policies? Mapping Approaches to Evidence, Social Technologies and Transnational Influences*. Springer.
- Krejsler, J. B., & Moos, L. (Eds.). (2023). *School Policy Reform in Europe: Exploring transnational alignments, national particularities and contestations*. Springer.
- Kushnir, I. (2021). The role of the European Education Area in European Union integration in times of crises, *European Review*, 30(3), 301-321.
- Lima, L. (2021). Máquinas de administrar a educação. *Educação & Sociedade*, 42, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1590/ES.249276>
- Lingard, B. (2023). Ever-morphing relations between the global, supranational and the national in schooling policy: A reflection on some European cases. In J. B. Krejsler, & L. Moos (Eds.), *School Policy Reform in Europe: Exploring transnational alignments, national particularities and contestations* (pp. 263-279). Springer.
- Lolle, E. L., & Rasmussen, A. (2022). Choice and Competition in the Governance of the Danish Gymnasium School. In A. Rasmussen, & M. Dovemark (Eds.), *Governance and choice of upper secondary education in the Nordic countries: Access and fairness* (pp. 135-153). Springer International Publishing.
- Lubienski, C., Yemini, M., & Maxwell, C. (Eds.) (2022). *The Rise of External Actors in Education: Shifting Boundaries Globally and Locally*. Policy Press Scholarship Online.
- Lyon, M. A., Bretas, S. S., & Ready, D. D. (2021). Design Philanthropy: Challenges and Opportunities in the Evolution of Philanthropic Giving. *Educational Policy*, 37(3), 731-768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048211049426>
- Maire, S. (2020). The power of 'soft skills': the role of the OECD in the shaping of a new cognitive motive in the global agora of education. In D. Dolowitz, M. Hadjiisky, & R. Normand (Eds.), *Shaping Policy Agendas* (pp. 95-115). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Martins, E., & Viseu, S. (2024). Philanthropy enactment in Portuguese public schools: the case of a program on digital education by a private foundation. *Comparative Education Review*, 68(4). <https://doi.org/10.1086/733481>
- Melo, M.B. (2009). *Os Professores do ensino secundário e os rankings escolares: Reflexos da reflexividade mediatizada*. Fundação Manuel Leão.
- Normand R. (2023). French education policies and the PISA paradigm: the strong republican State absorbing external influences. In J. Krejsler, & L. Moos (Eds.), *School policy reforms in Europe* (pp. 117-137). Springer.
- Normand, R. (2012). The doubts and uncertainties of French educators in the face of travelling policies. In T. Seddon, & T. Levin (Eds.), *World Yearbook of Education 2013* (pp. 184-200). Routledge.
- Normand, R. (2014). The French pinnacle of PISA. In M. Lawn, & R. Normand (Eds.), *Shaping of European education. Interdisciplinary approaches* (pp. 32-49). Routledge.
- Normand, R. (2020). France: The French State and Its Typical "Agencies" in Education. Policy Transfer and Ownership in the Implementation of Reforms. In H. Årlestig, & O. Johansson (Eds.), *Educational Authorities and the Schools. Educational Governance Research* (pp. 151-168). Springer.



- Normand, R. (2021). The new European political arithmetic of inequalities in education: A history of the present. *Social inclusion*, 9(3), 361-371. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i3.4339>
- Normand, R. (2022). PISA as epistemic governance within the European political arithmetic of inequalities: A sociological perspective illustrating the French case. In A. Teodoro (Ed.), *Critical perspectives on PISA as a means of global governance* (pp. 48-69). Routledge.
- Nóvoa, A. (1998) *Histoire & comparaison*. Educa.
- Nóvoa, A., & Barroso, J. (1999). Ensino Preparatório. In A. Barreto, & M. F. Mónica (Eds.), *Dicionário de História de Portugal* (pp. 634-636). Figueirinhas.
- Olmedo, A. (2018). Venture philanthropy and education policy-making: Charity, profit, and the so-called “democratic state.” In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of global educational reform* (pp. 47-69). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ozga, J. (2009). Governing education through data in England: From regulation to self-evaluation. *Journal of education policy*, 24(2), 149-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930902733121>
- Portuguese Republic (2021). *Recovery and Resilience Plan*. [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-plan_en)
- Poucet, B., & Prost, A. (2016). La réforme en éducation au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en France. *Carrefours de l'éducation*, 41(1), 11-15. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cdle.041.0011>
- Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2009). The OECD and global shifts in education policy. In R. Cowen, & A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (pp. 437-453). Springer.
- Rizvi, F., Lingard, B., & Rinne, R. (2022). Reimagining globalization and education: an Introduction. In F. Rizvi, B. Lingard, & R. Rinne (Eds.), *Reimagining globalization and education* (pp. 1-10). Routledge.
- Robertson, S., Mundy, K., & Verger, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Public private partnerships in education: New actors and modes of governance in a globalizing world*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Santos I., Carvalho L.M., & Melo B. P. (2022). The media's role in shaping public opinion on education. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 17(1), 29-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999211057753>
- Santos, I. (2022). *Externalisations in the Portuguese parliament and print media: a complexity approach to education policymaking processes*. [PhD thesis, Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University and IE-Ulissboa]. Tampere University Repository. <https://trepo.tuni.fi/handle/10024/137570>
- Stoleroff, A. (2007). The revolution in the public services sector in Portugal: With or without the unions. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 13(4), 637-657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/102425890701300408>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Non-state actors in education: Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/non-state-actors>
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2017). *Build back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction*. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/words-action-guidelines-build-back-better-recovery-rehabilitation-and-reconstruction>
- Viseu, S., & Carvalho, L. M. (2021). Policy networks, philanthropy, and education governance in Portugal: the raise of intermediary actors. *Foro de Educación*, 19(1), 81-104. <https://doi.org/10.14516/fde.818>
- Waldow, F., & Steiner-Khamsi, G. (Eds.). (2019). *Understanding PISA's attractiveness: Critical analyses in comparative policy studies*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Wiborg, S., & Larsen, K. R. (2017). Why school choice reforms in Denmark fail: The blocking power of the teacher unions. *Comparative Education*, 53(2), 223-239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12203>
- Williamson, B. (2016). Digital education governance: An introduction. *European Educational Research Journal*, 15(1), 3-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904115616630>

**Keywords:** Publicness in education; public education; non-state actors; international large-scale assessments; accountability

## Die schwindende Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie in der öffentlichen Bildung und die zunehmende Einflussnahme nichtstaatlicher Akteure in der Bildungssteuerung: Der Fall Dänemark, Frankreich und Portugal

### Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht, wie die zunehmenden Eingriffe nichtstaatlicher Akteure in die Bildungssteuerung die demokratische Entscheidungsfindung an öffentlichen Schulen beeinflussen. Wir konzentrieren uns auf die Auswirkungen dieser Interventionen auf öffentliche Schulen in Dänemark, Frankreich und Portugal in Bezug auf die miteinander verbundenen Dimensionen, die typischerweise von nichtstaatlichen Akteuren befürwortet werden: der Einsatz internationaler Large-Scale-Assessments, Rechenschaftspflicht, Datafizierung und Digitalisierung des Bildungswesens. Trotz der unterschiedlichen kulturellen Traditionen und historischen Entwicklungen in diesen drei Ländern zeigt der Beitrag, dass die Einflussnahme nichtstaatlicher Akteure zunimmt und paradoxerweise dazu führt, die Öffentlichkeit der Schulen zu schwächen.

**Schlagworte:** Öffentlichkeit in der Bildung; öffentliche Bildung; nichtstaatliche Akteure; internationale Large-Scale-Assessments; Rechenschaftspflicht

## L'affaiblissement du caractère public et démocratique de l'éducation et l'intervention des acteurs non étatiques dans la gouvernance de l'éducation : le cas du Danemark, de la France et du Portugal

### Résumé

Cet article examine comment les interventions croissantes des acteurs non étatiques dans la gouvernance de l'éducation affectent la prise de décision démocratique dans les écoles publiques. Nous nous concentrerons sur les effets de ces interventions dans les écoles publiques au Danemark, en France et au Portugal concernant des dimensions étroitement liées qui sont généralement préconisées par les acteurs non étatiques : l'utilisation d'évaluations internationales à grande échelle, la redevabilité, la datafication et la numérisation de l'éducation. Malgré les différentes traditions culturelles et trajectoires historiques de ces trois pays, cet article montre que l'intervention des acteurs non étatiques se renforce et tend paradoxalement à affaiblir le caractère public des écoles.

**Mots-clefs:** bien public; éducation publique; acteurs non étatiques; évaluations internationales; redevabilité

## L'indebolimento della dimensione pubblica e della democrazia nell'istruzione pubblica e la crescente intervento di attori non statali nella governance dell'istruzione: il caso di Danimarca, Francia e Portogallo

### Riassunto

Questo articolo analizza come i crescenti interventi degli attori non statali nella governance dell'istruzione stiano plasmando i processi decisionali democratici nelle scuole pubbliche. Ci concentriamo sugli effetti di questi interventi nelle scuole pubbliche di Danimarca, Francia e Portogallo in relazione alle dimensioni interconnesse tipicamente promosse dagli attori non statali: l'uso delle valutazioni internazionali su larga scala, la rendicontazione, la dataficazione e la digitalizzazione dell'istruzione. Nonostante le diverse tradizioni culturali e traiettorie storiche nei tre paesi, l'articolo mostra che l'intervento degli attori non statali è in aumento e tende paradossalmente a indebolire la dimensione pubblica nelle scuole.

**Parole chiave:** dimensione pubblica dell'istruzione; istruzione pubblica; attori non statali; valutazioni internazionali su larga scala; rendicontazione

**Sofia Viseu** is Assistant Professor at the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa. Her current research interests include education governance, policy networks, network ethnography, and new non-state actors in education. She is a co-convenor of Network 23 Policy Studies and Politics of Education at the European Educational Research Association.

Research areas: education governance, policy networks, non-state actors in education.

UIDEF, Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa, Alameda da Universidade, P-1649-013 Lisboa

E-mail: [sviseu@ie.ulisboa.pt](mailto:sviseu@ie.ulisboa.pt)

**Luís Miguel Carvalho** is Full Professor at the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa. His recent research focuses on international comparative assessments and educational governance, and transnational circulation of education reforms. He is currently the head of IE-ULisboa, and coordinates the R&D Centre on Education and Training (UIDEF).

Research areas: international comparative assessments, educational governance, transnational circulation of education models and reforms.

UIDEF, Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa, Alameda da Universidade, P-1649-013 Lisboa

E-mail: [lmcarvalho@ie.ulisboa.pt](mailto:lmcarvalho@ie.ulisboa.pt)

**John Benedicto Krejsler** is Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark. His research on (pre)school and teacher education in transnational perspective combines education policy, conditions for producing ‘truths’, and social technologies. He was President of the Nordic Educational Research Association; council member of EERA; Visiting Professor at Kristianstad University, Sweden, UCLA, USA and University of Strathclyde, UK. Current research focus: Bildung crisis in a multipolar world.

Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Tuborgvej 164, DK-2400 Copenhagen

E-mail: [jok@edu.au.dk](mailto:jok@edu.au.dk)

**Romuald Normand** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Strasbourg, France and Associate Visiting Professor at Beijing Normal University and Aarhus University Copenhagen. He works on comparative education policies and politics. Romuald Normand is convenor of the network 28 “Sociologies of European Education” at the European Educational Research Association.

Research areas: education policy and management.

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Strasbourg, 22 rue René Descartes, F-67084 Strasbourg CEDEX

E-mail: [rnormand@unistra.fr](mailto:rnormand@unistra.fr)