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PISA as a Knowledge-Policy Instrument

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Introduction

Nowadays policy-makers advocating policy transfers tend more to refer to international standards rather than to a specific educational system (Steiner-Khamsi 2012: 9). This chapter addresses the relation of governing and knowledge by focusing on the fabrication, circulation and mobilization, in the course of public action, of one carrier of international standards that has apparently become a recurrent category in the contemporary lexicon in education – PISA, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment.

Throughout the last decade products generated under the PISA label (reports, methods, tables) have been differently used in diverse social spaces (research agencies, state and supranational bureaucracies, media) and scales (local, national, regional). Thus, the acronym seems to pervade multiple knowledge and policy contexts: one may see PISA results (or analysis, or implications) mobilized in order to galvanize disputes or to legitimate policies, but one may also note the presence of PISA in the making of secondary research or in the making of assessment tools (based on their rationale and method). In parallel, PISA has expanded, since the first assessment (2000), in various ways: broadening the geographical-political scope, with a growing number of countries involved (specially non-OECD countries); increasing the number and focus of the surveys and target populations; connecting with other OECD programmes; extending the number of experts and public and private organizations associated with the development of PISA-related activities of inquiry, exchange and publication.

Not forgetting the cultural specificities of the contexts through which PISA travels and the already acknowledged variability of form, content, amplitude and intensity of its impact in national policies (Bieber and Martens 2011; Dobbins and Martens 2012; Erlt 2006; Gregor 2012; Grek 2009; Glück et al. 2012; Pons 2012; Rautalin and Alasuutari 2009; Rinne et al. 2004; Steiner-Khamsi 2003; Takayama 2008), PISA may nonetheless be analysed as an object around which (and based on which) there has been a recurring creation of perceptions about today’s educational problems and appropriate ways of dealing with them. Informed by the hypothesis that new forms of governing are connected with new ways of knowing (Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal 2003; Ozga 2008), the analysis developed in this chapter focuses on the processes that sustain the expansion of this exemplar of comparative governing knowledge and the ways it achieves the status of an indispensable resource for thinking-acting in policy, for the imagination and/or the scrutiny of educational problems and policies.

Points of Departure

Advocating the idea that ‘public policy is a sociopolitical space constructed as much through techniques and instruments as through aims or contents’, Lascoumes and Le Gaiës (2007: 4-6) use the notion of public policy instrument to refer to the devices used to organize social relations between administrative and administered subjects according to specific interpretations of the social world they address and based on a specific concept about the ways it should be oriented, coordinated and controlled. From their perspective, instruments are a combination of technical components (e.g., calculating techniques, a type of law, a specification of procedures) and social components (as they sustain and are sustained by values, interpretations, concepts about the social realities they envisage). Accordingly, we approach PISA as a policy instrument that combines comparative assessment techniques with a set of representations about education and a philosophy of (transnational and national) regulation of education policies and practices. Moreover, PISA is here envisaged as a ‘knowledge-based’ and ‘knowledge-oriented regulation instrument’ (van Zanten 2011: 33; see also Pons and van Zanten 2007): it draws on knowledge ‘but also produce[s] and diffuse[s] knowledge in order to shape the behavior of actors in a given policy domain’. Therefore, PISA exemplifies the presence, in the contemporary policy processes, of forms of regulation that favour information and persuasion (and acting through the actors’ reflexivity) instead of command and control (Lascoumes and Le Gaiës 2007).

The fabrication, circulation and mobilization of PISA (as a knowledge-based and knowledge-oriented instrument) is here analysed as a ‘complex of operations’.
interdependent practices’ (see Latour, 1989); from constructing a subject of inquiry (the competences of literacy) to establishing a ‘monopoly of competence’ around the issue: from convincing politicians, bureaucrats, experts, researchers, in order to guarantee informational, financial, and human resources, to building ‘public confidence’. From this perspective the accomplishment of PISA depends on interesting, bringing together and encouraging co-operation among diverse actors (experts, OECD professionals, politicians, high-level civil servants, researchers) around a complex flow of activities that guarantee the making, circulation and legitimacy of a knowledge-policy instrument that, consequently, is accepted as appropriate to the understanding and to governing of education systems. These processes go hand in hand with the making of definitions and expectations about the conduct of young people, and scripts for policy-making. In sum, to analyse the making and the trajectory of PISA one needs to consider the processes that connect diverse social worlds in the production and use of cognitive and normative frames about education and the ways it should be governed and that guarantee (concurrently) the indispensability of OECD as an ‘ideational authority’ (Marcussen 2004).

Our analysis draws also on the idea that when PISA products (rationality, results, methods, etc.) circulate they may be put to different political uses and, most of all, acquire new meanings. PISA travels and drives people, but it also shifts while travelling across different social worlds and discursive spaces. This multidirectional analytical orientation (Carvalho 2012) invites scrutiny of knowledge-policy instruments as potentially changeable and multi-usable products of such intertwining of ideas and agencies. This perspective is compatible with the socio-political approach to policy instruments: if, as institutions, instruments ‘structure public policy according to their own logic of policy’ (and, therefore, have ‘their own force of action’), it is also evident that they have trajectories and are submitted to controversies and modifications (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007: 10, 17).

The Emergence and Cognitive Features of PISA

But it is the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, which tests young people’s acquisition of knowledge and skills for life, that is the most powerful and extensive tool for considering educational outcomes and transforming public policy.

(OECD 2011: 17)

This self-laudatory judgement shows the importance assigned to PISA by OECD as one of its major means of action in the education sector, created with an overt policy orientation. PISA’s aim is to provide a stable point of reference against which to monitor the evolution of education systems’ (OECD 2007: 17). And it is developed from an explicit perspective about the relation between policy and knowledge and about the making of knowledge, ‘a collaborative effort, bringing together scientific expertise from the participating countries, steered jointly by their governments on the basis of shared, policy-driven interests’ (op. cit.: 10).

PISA did not emerge from nowhere. It has a social-historical foundation linked with phenomena external and internal to the OECD, as has been documented and analysed (see Bottani 2006; Lundgren 2011; Mons 2007; Morgan 2007). For the analysis developed here, it is important to keep in mind that PISA is part of a long-term movement towards the institutionalization of a form of comparative knowledge and a script for knowledge-policy relationships. Put briefly, this comparative perspective states that: regular and systematic assessments are truthful practices for the improvement of national education systems, and that such improvement has to be analysed by taking into account the pace of change of other countries; international comparison of performances is responsible for changing the concept of quality applied to education systems, reaching the core issue – student achievement – and are also recognized as being able to consider educational complexity (by collecting relevant data on learning structures, on students social-economic backgrounds, on school structures and policy choices). In sum, PISA may be seen as part of a comparative project that Nóvoa (1998) has characterized as steered by pragmatic reasoning, committed to the building of indicators for decision-making.

However, OECD’s PISA also reshapes this knowledge tradition. PISA has a set of characteristics that make it different from other similar instruments and that may be related to its success in the field of international comparative assessments (Bottani 2006: 82-88). These are: the frequency of tests (triennial) and its diachronic coherence; the focus on a narrow set of expertise; the ‘flexibility’ of the programme owing to its modular structure; the ‘stability of the population’ (15-year-old pupils); the focus on competencies instead of the official school curriculum and the politicization of the programme, ensuring that the funding governments have a say in controlling the priorities of the programme and its application. Further singularities of PISA (and the emergence of the programme) evidence the scope of OECD’s political work – in brief, an intervention through soft modes of governance, with the focus on ‘surveillance of performances’ and ‘assessment of policies’, impacting on national policies as a ‘creator, purveyor and legitimator of ideas’ (Mahon and McBride 2008: 7-15; see also Martens and Jakobi 2010) and an agenda that, since the 1990s, is marked by the idea of monitoring quality and in which educational problems are equated with the requirements of a knowledge-based economy (Rinne et al. 2004: 459-62; see also Henry et al. 2001; Rubenson 2008).

In this context, PISA became an important instrument because with it, as Henry et al. (2001) noted, the agency no longer depends on statistical data created by national systems and may produce its own data, and OECD’s capacities to participate in transnational governance in education increased when the agency made a turn towards comparative studies (Martens 2007). The point here is: with PISA OECD does not only generate its own data – but also may claim to be the provider of an expert-based independent framework for the monitoring and steering of school systems. We should now ask, what are the main cognitive and normative features of PISA regarding education and regarding policy processes in education?

School systems have to adapt to changes in the economy and society, from industrial to post-industrial knowledge economies and societies – this is a recurrent topic in PISA documents. The Programme incorporates and disseminates ways of thinking-doing that are supposed to enable policy-makers to naturally take part in the exercises of monitoring and mutual surveillance (practices seen as appropriate for – and thus defining – their identities and roles). The arguments developed in OECD
texts or by OECD's executives and/or collaborators (Hugonnier 2008; Schleicher 2007; Turner 2007; Weinberg 2008) assert that PISA supplies policy-makers with rigorous comparative data that allows them to: conduct themselves rationally; learn about the place of each educational system in the worldwide competitive space; identify their country's relative positioning vis-à-vis the 'knowledge society' and/or 'knowledge economy'; and, consequently, to make their education systems move to the (physical and symbolic) time of 'tomorrow's world'.

If PISA sustains particular cultural dicta about policy-making in contemporary times, it also enacts representations and problematizations regarding the educational model of contemporary societies: it operates through redefining students as life-long learners; redefining teaching–learning relationships and settings; redefining school knowledge. The frames, questions and indicators used in the assessment of 'literacy performances' define young people's characteristics and expected modes of action or repertoires of 'competent' attitudes and behaviors. What is more, such a common expected background of performance and engagement in social life is also, an imagination of a common educational model for an imagined knowledge society.

A good example of this relates to the innovative focus that PISA claims to bring to assessments – rather than examine mastery of specific school curricula, PISA looks at students' ability to apply knowledge and skills in key subject areas and to analyse, reason and communicate effectively as they examine, interpret and solve problems (PISA website). This definition allows OECD to introduce a double shift: first, a move away from the conventional self-reflection of national school systems based on their own categories and outputs (with assessments relying on tests and examinations based on national curriculum goals and content) and towards the territory of outcomes, thus directly connecting the contexts, practices and results of teaching/learning with the so-called demands of the school system environment and enabling a move away from the rationale of previous comparative studies of student performances and their dependency on national curricula. The second element of this double shift is a redefinition of what constitutes appropriate school knowledge. The notion of competence enacts a utilitarian perspective on knowledge as it takes practical usefulness in solving everyday problems as the main criterion for the assessment of school knowledge (Mangex 2008). Therefore it promotes a restructuring of curriculum as trans-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary. Furthermore, these shifts go hand in hand with calls for change in teaching–learning structures (e.g., from hierarchical to organic models) and in the formal education model in order to move towards the so-called knowledge economy and society.

**Fabricating PISA**

The emergence of PISA and the legitimacy that it seems to have in current debates on educational issues cannot be separated from a cultural and political environment that disseminates the conceptions of global economic competitiveness and the knowledge economy (Broadfoot 2000), and from the emerging age of accountability (Hopmann 2007). It surely cannot be separated from the status achieved by OECD as an 'expert organization' (Noaksau and Jacobsson 2003) - the recognition of OECD precedes and fosters the recognition of PISA. For instance, the justifications made by national authorities regarding their adhesion to and participation in PISA are strongly inhabited by symbolic elements related to OECD status: that from looking for a position among the advanced nations of the world and its major forums (of policy and expertise) to the recognition of the agency as an instance specialized in the production of knowledge relevant to policy-making (Carvalho et al. 2009).

Thus, one might simply see PISA as an OECD capitalization on such conditions. Our point though is that to understand the indispensability searched for and apparently achieved by PISA, one needs also to keep under scrutiny the collection of practices that keep the instrument alive and confronting successfully other agencies that also produce monitoring instruments, either at international, regional or national scales. OECD's intervention occurs also in a multilateral space where international, national and local agencies compete and cooperate in educational lending–borrowing practices (see Stelner–Kahmsi 2004).

From this perspective, in order to achieve the status of an indispensable instrument, OECD's PISA depends on the creation of a favourable ecology. Such a quest for legitimation partly determines the very characteristics of the instrument as well as how it develops. We retrieve here the idea that PISA is a complex instrument made to attract and to attach to social actors, public debates and public policies. We will develop this idea focusing on two related issues: the organizational aspects of PISA and the rules and social processes that support the production and dissemination of PISA's knowledge.

**Connecting Worlds**

PISA is not merely a triennial survey with a subsequent triennial report, but a complex of activities, involving multiple social worlds, sustained by communication and organization. When we refer to diverse social worlds we have in mind those who are involved in PISA's formal structures (public and private research centres, experts, OECD professionals, policy-makers, high-level civil servants and technicians from multiple countries), as well as those indirectly involved: media and national politicians who selectively discuss the results; national and/or regional governing and/or administrative structures that use PISA knowledge for creating their own assessment devices; even researchers from various fields who use PISA data in order to build secondary analysis. Thus, the accomplishment of PISA depends on bringing together those actors through an organized flow of activities and produces inquiry-related activities (for example the preparation of the framework of the surveys, preparation of the questionnaires and other tools, 'pilot testing' of related activities, conduct of the 'main assessment', analysis of data). These activities also include the production of the 'field trial' (including the definition and selection of items, the translation and face-to-face activities (in meetings, workshops, etc.), and numerous publications (main reports, technical reports, thematic reports, national reports, manuals, databases, etc.). In sum the success of PISA depends on the establishment of effective associations with (and between) multiple social actors in the activities of inquiry, publication and exchange that support the production, dissemination and use of its own knowledge-related materials.

When we explore who is who in the making of PISA frameworks and main technical tools, we might say that the monopoly of expertise created around PISA rests on a somewhat narrow social basis that includes a nucleus of between ten and twenty actors (from private and public organizations, experts from different areas, and OECD members) that also participate in the coordination of PISAs multiple activities.
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Assemblage, Plasticity and Multiplication of Knowledge

All these practices are related to the production of a specific kind of knowledge. This is knowledge for policy, generated in order to assist policy-making and/or to provide policy-makers with steering tools (Desjardins and Rubenson 2009; Nasseli 2008; Ozga 2008), and is created by specific practices and referencing specific criteria. In the making and flow of this type of knowledge, it is not only the quality of scientific or technical credibility that counts; the criterion of 'contextuality' - that is, following Lindquist (1999: 31-35) the quality or condition of being relevant and able to be handled by an audience - also counts. The making of PISA ecology resists on the capacity to engage social actors in practices that uphold mutual surveillance as an appropriate way of knowing-governing. Such ability relates to three qualities we address here regarding the making and the diffusion of knowledge: the assemblage, plasticity and multiplication of knowledge for policy.

Knowledge used and generated by PISA surveys and reports is disciplined by the so-called literacy framework and by assumptions, concepts and methods from the psychometric world. But it also entails contributions generated by experts related to teaching and learning (specifically of science, reading and mathematics). In fact, the development of the surveys and the reports in each PISA domain - the core domains of mathematics, reading and science, but also problem-solving, ICT or financial literacy (included in the 2012 survey) - is diverse and depends on the degree of consensus between experts, their permeability to political and cultural factors or pressures, and their alignment with OECD discourse. Furthermore, other sources of knowledge and actors have influence, such as those who work on the relationships between the performances and the so-called contextual variables - streams of knowledge coming from policy evaluation and analysis, and from the school effectiveness tradition. Thus, knowledge produced and disseminated within the PISA programme rests on consensus, among OECD staff, research consortiums, experts, national representatives, about what counts as usable knowledge. This assemblage - in which the allocation and the relocation of epistemic and methodological authority occurs - is played out under the 'transgressive', 'collective' and 'self-organized and self-authorizing' dispositions and practices highlighted in studies of the contemporary making of expert knowledge (see Nowotny et al., 2001). From the point of view of those who steer PISA - these practices prove the advantages of the existence of the forum of supranational deliberation that accommodates experts and countries, independent of national parochialisms and interests.

What we label here as plasticity of knowledge is perceptible in PISA documents and relates strongly to the need for contextuality. Two examples quickly suggest themselves when one reads several PISA main reports: the editing work which creates a para-text that step by step summarizes and selectively highlights the information from the body of the report; or the attention given by the editors to the creation of a readable document, for instance by means of the relatively frequent introduction of texts that inform the reader how data may or may not be interpreted. Perhaps less evident, but more interesting are the metamorphoses of data/information/knowledge throughout the PISA main reports: there is a shift from moments of revelation (for instance of the core results of the survey - the performance of the students and the
profiles of literacy competence) to moments of explanation (the interpretation of the results through relationships between variables, like socio-economic status or factors associated with national and/or school policies); and, finally, to spaces of condensation, where selected findings meet selected policy questions – school autonomy, accountability, privatization, involvement of stakeholders in the management and financing, school choice and school improvement – most of them related to the move towards new modes of governing the school system.

A multiplier effect is evident when one considers the variety of publications produced under the PISA label (Carvalho with Costa 2009: 67-69). In each PISA cycle there are several reports displaying results and analyses: the general report (prepared by the OECD secretariat, with the support of several experts); the thematic report (on selected topics, produced by external researchers) and the extensive reports (which result from partnerships between the OECD and other international agencies). Together with the national reports (elaborated by national teams) these documents express an amplification of PISA data through varied analysis. Other types of reports deal with the methodology implemented in PISA. These are oriented towards audiences with diverse interests and skills: the technical reports display specific information about tests, scales, samples and quality control mechanisms, while the databases and the reports on the databases supply information that enables secondary analyses to be carried out in line with the methodologies used for data collection and processing. Finally, some documents disseminate the basic assessments and are written for teachers, parents and pupils. There we may find examples of test tasks (and how they are graded); a (limited) number of questions used in the surveys (and their respective answers) and others used in the development and experimentation phases of the survey.

In sum, among these materials publicly disseminated it is possible to detect different kinds of documents. Importantly, this variety of publications (and other informational products) has explicit target populations and opens up a multiplicity of possible uses, whether in order to reproduce and/or re-contextualize the data/information or in order to produce (new) knowledge from it. In its capacity to attach to and to attract people (and their informational needs), the instrument is able to extend its reach. The 'plasticity' of the tool is a crucial quality in explaining why and how PISA is used differently by so many diverse actors – national researchers, media, policy players, bureaucrats and even by teachers (though they do not necessarily know that they are using it). The ecology of PISA rests on this feature too.

But what happens when these products circulate in diverse social and knowledge contexts?

From the Circulation and the Multiple Uses to the Attraction of PISA

For more than ten years supplementary visions have been added to PISA and new knowledge, policies and politics have been assembled within it. Comparative analyses of the effects of PISA on national policies, though scarce, have identified different kinds of responses to PISA. Steiner-Khamsi (2003), based on existing research, identifies contrasting responses in Germany and the UK regarding PISA 2000: 'scandalisation' and 'glorification' (Finland), 'shock' (Germany) and 'promotion' (UK), further pointing out different paths and uses of the PISA data by English and Scottish political actors. Bieber and Martens (2011) conclude their comparison of the impact of PISA, as a matter of OECD soft governance, on national policies in Switzerland and the USA – respectively, a 'well scoring' and a 'underperforming' country – and point out the contrasting reception of the instrument: from comprehensively reforming the education system to no echo at all. Analysing the impact in two countries with similar results – Germany and the Czech Republic – Gregor (2012) contrasts the numerous policy measures being adopted in the former with the absence of reaction from policy-makers in the latter. Pons (2012), analysing the effects of PISA in six European countries (Portugal, Romania, France, francophone Belgium, Scotland and Hungary) moves away from the idea of a PISA shock in order to emphasize the diverse ways in which their results are analysed, translated and reinterpreted, and points out that the main effects of PISA may well be to confirm national predetermined opinions on various topics.

In fact the studies conducted on the circulation and use of PISA in those European spaces show conspicuous diversity in the use of PISA in national/regional contexts (see Carvalho et al. 2009); for example, its mobilization for the making of analysis and argumentation, based upon data/knowledge about specific educational policy issues; its use as a resource for the development of studies on national educational realities and its use for purposes of making or improving domestic knowledge-based and knowledge-oriented instruments, particularly in environments where accountability and/or quality assurance issues are already central. With respect to the representations and rules that the instrument carries, it is also clear that these may be filtered, corrected, modified, sometimes even strongly contested when moving through different socio-cultural contexts. In fact policies that invoke the knowledge generated by PISA vary from country to country and even within each country (over time). They may differ regarding the solutions advocated and the goals to be achieved, their targets (students, teachers, families) or even their declared values. There is, once more, a selective mobilization of knowledge, so that recurring public policy issues remain, return or gain greater visibility as education problems in political agendas.

Such selection is not independent of the knowledge and/or political orientation of the contenders. Clearly, the differences stated above are not separable from factors related to political and cultural factors, for example, knowledge traditions within the field of assessment and the degree of their philosophical, theoretical or methodological proximity–distance regarding the PISA international comparative assessment framework; the strength of the previous national involvement in international studies/organizations; the agenda of on-going reforms (PISA is seemingly more present in public debates when issues of accountability, monitoring, or changing conceptions of curriculum, are at stake) and the agenda of policy-brokers or entrepreneurs. Therefore, PISA objects/texts are reinterpreted, made acceptable and efficient for specific socio-cognitive contexts, and each context may exhibit different abilities and knowledge resources and circumstances in which to do so.

However – and alongside such a multiplicity of uses – few commonalities in the reception of PISA are also manifest. We emphasize three common trends in public action scenes. First, there is a kind of a resiling of the knowledge deliverable in PISA...
Towards a Conclusion

To sum up, it seems reasonable to state that PISA is currently perceived in the public space as almost an obvious provider of information based on evidence and also that it may be used to support the debating of established problems and/or the imagination of new futures for education in contemporary societies. At the same time, one needs to recognize that if the products generated by PISA provide a framework of possibilities for policies, one cannot say that there is an automatic or an inevitable convergence of policies as an effect of PISA. This, the perception of the existence of conspicuous differences in the mobilization of PISA by diverse knowledge communities in different political contexts (be they national, regional, local or transnational) coexists with the recognition of their attractiveness.

This is not necessarily a contradiction if we think that the success of PISA does not depend on effectively generating convergence in terms of policy options or solutions, but rather in creating a functional and/or symbolic dependence in the various social worlds that it reaches. On the one hand, the instrument is an organizational and discursive platform for making durable connections with and between the worlds of politics and knowledge, by taking into account the differences between these and by creating products able to feed their different interests and dispositions regarding the use of PISA. From this point of view, the success of PISA resides in the ability to maintain its attraction for diverse social worlds and their attachment to the activities of inquiry, exchange and publication under the PISA label. That is its strength and form of power: to operate from the participation (from the unconditional to the critical) of various social worlds in production, dissemination, use and consumption. On the other hand, the acceptance of PISA as an obvious resource for policy, even if only rhetorical or in order to justify already adopted courses of action, even if triennially (following each PISA cycle), is also a signal of the strength achieved by a set of rules for the governing of education: the primacy of an evidence-based model for the coordination and control of activities in the education sector, contrasting and disqualifying forms of coordination based on opinions and/or philosophies; the free acquiescence of politicians to mutual surveillance as a proper and efficient practice for the administration of the social and the endorsement of systematic comparative assessment of 'literacy competences and domains of competence' as a useful and reliable tool for the steering educational systems. This is another aspect of the strength of the instrument: that controversies, disputes and analyses of solutions to the problems of education, and/or the scrutiny of educational policies and practices are engaged in with some kind of commitment to the tool.

The attraction of national policy actors around this device of mutual surveillance of competences may well be understood as an indicator of the strengthening of their dependence regarding the expert organization that provides it. However, such a relation should not be seen only as one of dependence in relation to a trusted resource for the administration of each national educational realm. This dependence operates also at the cognitive level. For instance, one might talk of a PISA effect in the revision of reference societies in national education debates: there is a move towards the observation of those countries associated with the best results or with the making of progress between PISA surveys, but also – and this is perhaps more important – towards those countries that are imagined to be equivalents because they share certain educational problems that are depicted by PISA categories and analysis.

To conclude, the effect of the attraction occurs in a wider cognitive level: when the surveillance of performances is made through the measurement of the outcomes of every school system, each one of these is connected to the so-called demands of an imagined global environment (the 'knowledge society' and the worldwide competitive 'knowledge economy') and each one is assessed through categories other than those nationally generated. Thus, the attractiveness of PISA may well be related, as others as have pointed out (Mangen and Hilgers 2012: 199) to the changing relations of power between transnational and national policy fields and to the decrease of the latter's abilities to delineate their own understanding of education and to drive their choices regarding the 'legitimate means of making sense' of their own activity.

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Notes

1 Following Everett Hughes' notion of 'ecology of institutions', as quoted by Star and Griesemer (1989: 599): 596, by ecology we mean the existing contextual factors of PISA as the agency skills of establishing continued and lasting exchanges with selected actors.

2 For an extended discussion, see Carvalho (2011).

3 On the strong normative function of PISA regarding the identity of youngsters in contemporary societies, see Popkewitz (2011). On the OECD cognitive and normative orientations regarding lifelong learning, see Rizvi and Lingard (2006).


5 On the diversity of PISA reception in those six countries, see the thematic issue of Siglo – Educational Sciences Journal, 10 (2009), PISA and educational public policies: studies in six European countries. Online, available at: http://sisifo.fpce.ul.pt/pois-26

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