'I do not like what I am becoming but…': transforming the identity of head teachers in Catalonia

Jordi Collet-Sabé

Published online: 05 Nov 2016.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 10

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

'I do not like what I am becoming but…': transforming the identity of head teachers in Catalonia

Jordi Collet-Sabé[a,b]

[a]Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogy, University of Vic, Barcelona, Spain; [b]Institute of Education, University College London, London, UK

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to elucidate how a new system of school and teacher assessment in Catalonia is transforming the conceptions, practices and identity of head teachers, especially younger ones. It begins by considering the impact of global neoliberal policies on educational practices, highlighting their Foucauldian productive nature. It then examines the educational context of Catalonia during the last 30 years, emphasising the changing role of head teachers and the impact of neoliberal governance. This is followed by an account and analysis of in-depth interviews with four head teachers, focusing especially on how the head teacher's objectives, practices and identities are being transformed, or produced, as a result of the new neoliberal 'assessment regime'. It ends with a discussion on the importance of refusal and resistance to this process and the need to reconsider basic educational and social questions.

1. Introduction

This article focuses on how neoliberal school policies are being enacted in Catalonia and the effect they have on head teachers' practices, subjectivity and identity. It begins by considering the impact of global neoliberal policies on educational practices and techniques of governing, in particular the techniques through which head teachers are valued and understood 'by numbers' (Ozga and Grek 2008; Grek 2009; Ball 2015a, 2015b), at a distance (Rose and Miller 2010) and through New Public Management technologies like market, competition, bureaucracy and so forth. (Sahlberg 2011; Verger and Curran 2014). Rather than adopting the traditional perspective on neoliberal policies as being the result of a 'retreat of the state', it highlights the 'positive and productive', in a Foucauldian sense, effects on education and, specifically, on head teachers[1]. This general perspective is then followed by a more specific focus on the educational context and history in Catalonia, considering first the impact of a number of different laws and decrees on the role and identity of head teachers, and second the effect of recent neoliberal governance on the Catalan education system. Having examined neoliberal policies on a macro and meso level, it then takes a more micro approach through qualitative research that interviews four head teachers in order to understand how neoliberal governance has affected their practices, their conceptions, their role, their subjective reactions and their identity. This section discusses the methodological context, analyses the results of the research and offers some final reflections on the changing identity of head teachers. The article ends with a final section that considers

---

CONTACT Jordi Collet-Sabé ✉ Jordi.Collet@uvic.cat

the importance of refusal and resistance to this process of neoliberal governance and the need to reconsider basic educational and social questions through a 'back-to-basics' approach (Ball 2015c) and critical questioning.

2. Neoliberalism and its 'productive' impact on education and head teachers

It is useful to make a distinction, and link, between Neoliberalism with capital 'N' and neoliberalism with a small 'n' (Ong 2007). The former refers to a global process related to market freedom, competition, depoliticisation, assessment or accountability (Lazzarato 2009; Ball 2014; Verger and Normand 2015); and the latter to how global processes are being enacted in concrete areas – in this case in the education system and, more specifically, that of Catalonia – as a particular technology of governing 'free' head teachers and how this technology is reshaping and producing new truths, practices, relationships and professional identities. In relation to this dual 'external and internal' dimension of neoliberalism, and in agreement with Osborne and Rose (1996, 11), I suggest that autonomisation – responsibilisation, assessment, marketisation, benchmarking and so forth in education are not 'errors or failed actions' of a retreating state – as the traditional perspective on neoliberalism holds – but rather key government technologies that allows them to govern at a distance (governance) and to produce, in this case, head teachers able to operate a regulated autonomy and be self-entrepreneurs within the responsibilities and opportunities of new subject positions (Rose and Miller 2010). Governance, assessment, school-based management, flexibility, performance-related pay and auditing, among other elements, are 'positive' techniques of government, in the technical, not ethical sense of the word. Enacting reforms is also about the de-construction of one professional identity and the re-construction of a new one. As Ball (2006, 15) puts it, 'who we are, the possibilities for who we might become, are also changed'. Power is productive, as Foucault (1981, 94) has made clear: 'relations of power are not in superstructural positions, with merely a role of prohibition or accompaniment. They have a directly productive role, where ever they come into play'.

Foucauldian tools have been used to analyse the modern school as an apparatus of permanent examination. Inside, the child-pupil is made visible and calculable and it is through constant examination that they become intelligible and even (self)-explainable. It is through this '*assessment régime*' that children build up a meaning of themselves as a pupil with marks, years, levels and so on. Nowadays, as Ball (2013) has pointed out, it looks like the whole system and every single school have become an object of the same dynamic. Through the 'regime of numbers' (Ozga and Lingard 2007; Ozga and Grek 2008; Ozga 2013; Ball 2015a) and their techniques of assessment, monitoring, classification and competition, the whole school conduct is conducted. And it is done through concepts, theories and perspectives like talent [the cornerstone concept of 2013 LOMCE conservative Spanish education law (Sennett 2006) – see below]; professional leadership related to quality, tests, marks and rankings (OECD 2008; Serpieri and Grimaldi 2015); changes in power relationships in schools like transforming the school governing body into a merely consultative space (Feito 2011; Bolívar 2014); or producing small new powers and huge responsibilities for head teachers. As Burchell (1996, 29) puts it, we can understand that:

> These forms encourage the governed to adopt a certain entrepreneurial form of practical relationship to themselves as a condition of their effectiveness and the effectiveness of this form of government (…) This involves 'offering' individuals and collectivities active involvement in action to resolve the kind of issues hitherto held to be the responsibility of authorized governmental agencies. However, the price of this involvement is that they must assume active responsibility for these activities (…) corresponding to the new forms in which the governed are encouraged, freely and rationally, to conduct themselves.

This is what can be called neoliberal governance: a rationality animated by the desire to govern at a distance and to produce an entrepreneurial identity in correspondence. Rose approached this governing or governance at a distance (1996, 43) as the complex assemblage of forces, techniques and devices that tries to regulate decisions and actions of individuals and organisations in relation to authoritative criteria. I agree that one of the most powerful techniques to affect the way in which head

teachers govern schools and govern themselves whilst following the rules of New Public Management freely and rationally is assessment (Ball 2003, 2015a; Ozga 2013). When I talk about assessment in education, I also could refer to 'audit society' (Power 1997), or the 'evaluative state' (Neave 1998) in which governments and international actors build up and spread out a set of exams, evaluations, tests and rankings related to students, teachers, schools and local authorities. These are the 'logical' response to the increasing (perceived) education risks and parallel decrease in trust in professionals sometimes expressed in current education discourse. Audit, this 'portable management tool', produces 'subjects of audit' that will be monitored and compared permanently against standards of performance (Jary 2002, 39). Obviously, these processes of discipline are having important impacts on professional identities in education because, as Ball puts it (2013, 72), it is always important to be aware of 'the capacity of assessment to create, rather than to just measure'. Through assessment, a model of (head) teachers, pupils or family is produced, made calculable and subject to the power of numbers, while at the same it produces resistance. Coming from a Catalan school culture quite susceptible to any kind of assessment, during the 2000s, and especially driven by the new hegemony of PISA, assessment has changed its own 'status' and now the Catalan government is today speaking about the 'assessment school culture'[2] (Bonal and Tarabini 2013; Bonal and Verger 2014). It is precisely this current wave of 'global school assessment', related to an increasing degree of school autonomy, new forms of school organisation and greater accountability, that places head teachers as the cornerstone of new school governance. They are becoming the main and almost sole people responsible for school assessment results and for the school innovations designed to improve these assessment outcomes.

This section has attempted to show briefly, primarily through a Foucauldian analysis, how Neoliberalism as a global process and ideology is linked to neoliberalism as it is applied to the education system generally, with an emphasis on its effect on head teachers and occasional references to Catalonia. The next section will focus more specifically on Catalonia, moving from a macro to meso level, providing some historical context and the impact of neoliberal governance in its schools, especially on head teachers' identities and practices. This will set the stage for a more micro approach, based on in-depth interviews, with the aim of shedding further light, through the personal experience of head teachers, on the impact of neoliberal governance.

3. The educational context of Catalonia

3.1. The impact of education laws since 1980

In this section, I offer a brief analysis of some elements of Catalan educational policies over the last 30 years, focusing especially on changes in the head teacher model. This will highlight that these elements have a concrete history (Ball 2013, 34) and have not always been *the* natural and *the* evident answers to current school challenges (OECD 2014).

The Spanish state transferred competences in formal education to the Catalan regional government in 1980. Since then, Catalan schools have belonged to the regional government and have been ruled under a mix of regulation between Spanish general laws that give a global organisational framework and decide about 40% of the curriculum; and Catalan laws that reshape, nuance and enact governance elements and decide 60% of curriculum content. An ambiguous legal regulation and the recognition that schools are the main place to build a Catalan and/or Spanish national identity, have ensured that the central and regional governments have been involved for 35 years in never-ending curriculum legal battles, especially about the languages and history curriculum (Catalan – Spanish) and also the management of teachers' professional careers. (Bonal and Rambla 2000). Local authorities have a small role in formal education, just providing land to build schools, managing and paying school caretakers and cleaning, promoting some educational projects and a minimal presence in school governing bodies.

Even taking into account these and many other elements, I agree that in the early eighties the Catalan government had the opportunity to enact the model of school government that they had decided. With a significant French state influence and admiration, they had built up a classical hierarchical,

bureaucratic and departmental government model with civil servants with entrance exams, school inspection corps and pyramidal structures – as the president of the Catalan government for 23 years recognised and regretted 30 years later in his memoirs (Pujol 2009). Furthermore, they enacted the family school 'right' of choice in a liberal interpretation of article 27 of the Spanish constitution related to the recognition and funding of an extensive catholic-granted schools network (approximately 40% of all schools in Catalonia). As Olmedo (2008), Fernández-Enguita (2008) or Viñao (2012) put it, even before the Spanish law in 1985 established these two principles – hierarchy/bureaucracy and freedom of choice – as the basis of a future quasi-market school choice, the Catalan government had proposed its own 'conservative revolution' mixing strong, hierarchical and bureaucratic governance of the educational system with freedom in family school choice linked to the private-granted school network.

When the Spanish general law LODE was established in 1985, head teachers became ideally a 'primus inter pares' due to the eligible and rotating character between the permanent staff. From the beginning of the 1980s Catalonia held to the same model. For nearly 20 years, head teachers used to rotate among permanent staff and this was viewed more as a provisional task and as part of a collective project, than a position of individual 'power' or leadership (Fernández-Enguita 1991; Bonal and Rambla 2000; Viñao 2004). For approximately 20 years, it could be said that in state primary schools being a head teacher was often a question of personal responsibility towards the rest of the staff, or a role that teachers had to play when it was their 'turn' (Cañadell 2013). As mentioned, it was not seen in a personal leadership sense or in a top-down or personal power perspective. To be head teacher for some years was becoming something quite usual for permanent state schoolteachers and many permanent staff did so. In grant-aided schools things were different because the ownership of the school (often related to a catholic religious order) meant that the head teacher was chosen by the owner directly, and in those schools the head teacher had a more hierarchical role with control over pedagogy but also over staff and working conditions. A new head teacher model was introduced in 1995 with the LOPEG law, changing from a democratic–participative perspective to a still participative but more professional model (Navareño 2012). From this law, head teachers became more than *primus inter pares* because to be elected they needed to get accredited by the inspectorate (Art.17). The pressure of 'professionalization and empowerment' on head teachers related to standard discourse had begun in the nineties (Gunter and Fitzgerald 2013) and was introduced in Spain through this law. That is, in both state and private schools, head teachers were increasingly required to assume more and more tasks especially in relation to management, and more responsibilities related both to child well-being, security and safety and to academic results. The former head teacher model has been deconstructed and replaced by a new model of professionalisation: head teachers' practices, rules, responsibilities and identity have been slightly, but significantly, changed (Viñao 2004).

Increasingly from the late nineties on, in approximately 50% of state schools, no one wanted to be head teacher, and it was to be the Education Inspectorate (equivalent to Ofsted) that designated one arbitrarily (Bonal and Rambla 2000). What it meant to be a head teacher was changing from a collective, democratic and rotational position, to a more personal responsibility and hierarchical role. This new model of head teachers' identity was introduced in the 1995 Spanish law, and evolved in the 2000s to the idea of professional, technical and personal leadership which was more formally established first in the LOE Spanish law (2006) and then, much more clearly, in the first Catalan Education Law (LEC 2009) and the conservative Spanish LOMCE (2013). Some of these changes in conception, practices, identity and rules of head teachers were based on this 'difficulty in finding head teachers', among other factors.

It is interesting to analyse how, through small and slow changes in terms of type and amount of practical responsibilities and things to do, forms and restrictions to be elected, and new concepts and ideals of what head teachers should be and do, among others, what being a head teacher meant was transforming (deconstruction – reconstruction). And how, when head teachers react against this new identity, tasks and responsibilities, their refusal is used to justify the introduction of a new head teacher model following the OECD debates and models of 'leadership' (OECD 2008). This analysis is not about different moral positions related to how head teachers should be and act. It is about analysing

how power and knowledge flow through institutions, people and documents and produce one type of education truth, scholars' concepts, government forms, (head) teachers and parents subjectivity and so forth. This productive, in the Foucauldian sense, process was examined in section two, and this section has discussed the context of Catalonia and how different educational laws, among other factors, have contributed to produce a new head teacher model. The next section will focus on the effect of recent neoliberal governance and new assessment instruments on the Catalan educational system, while section four will consider the current impact of such neoliberal governance on head teachers' identity and practices through a small number of in-depth interviews.

3.2. The impact of neoliberal governance in Catalonia

Since the conservative party returned to power in 2012 in Catalonia, and as a result of the deployment of the LEC (promoted and enacted by left-wing parties with the support of the conservatives), a broad range of small and progressive assessment instruments have been developed. For example, in 2014 the 'School Indicators System' (SIS) was introduced to evaluate the goals, actions and indicators that all schools (freely) introduce every year in their 'Annual Report of the School'[3]. The results of the SIS are analysed by Inspection which then comes up with new goals and proposals that have to be included in the following year's 'General Annual Forecast' – which will, in turn, be included in the Annual Report and assessed again by the SIS. As a result of this SIS assessment, for the first time ever in Catalonia and in a literally 'experimental way', Inspection will evaluate, with a mark, the school's degree of goals achievement and their progress[4]. The marks will be given on a 1–4 scale. This scale, probably inspired in the 1–4 England school scale (outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate), mixes the school's own goal achievement with a comparison against the performance of, in theory, other schools of the same typology in family, social environment and other related criteria. The three main dimensions involved in achieving a 'good mark' are: academic outcomes, goal achievement and equality conditions (based on rates of absenteeism and SEN – special education needs – pupils' attention and inclusion, with no more explanation). Furthermore, for the very first time in Catalonia, this new assessment model is linked with teacher promotion[5], which means that, through the deployment of a complex assessment system as a means of governing at a distance, the first step of performance-related pay has arrived in the Catalan education system.

It is interesting to analyse, here in the context of the impact of neoliberal education policies in Catalonia, the materialisation and the articulation of power in and through the institutions. The power of assessments and related rankings, classifications, proposals for improvement and so on are not just 'external' decrees or organisation devices. They 'write' over the body and the soul of (head) teachers through this power – knowledge dispositive (Foucault 1976, 32) and through a new compulsory and specific head teacher training led by the Public Administration School and a well-known business school of Barcelona. This model of head teacher training offers them, with both inducement and threat, a new identity based on individual leadership, assessment culture and management. Paraphrasing Margaret Thatcher[6], assessment is the method but the object is to change the heart and soul of head teachers, thus producing a new subjectivity, a new identity that will last in time. This is not done explicitly but rather through assessment undertaken in a context of freedom, in relation with transparency and especially an increasing of 'total responsibility' on the side of the head teachers (Tirado and Domènech 2001, 196).

Only a few years ago, when important debates about education had been held in Catalonia (Pacte Nacional per l'Educació 2005–2006 [National education pact debate 2005–2006]; Debats per la LEC 2007–2009 [Catalan Education Law – LEC debates 2007–2009]), the main actors of the field dismissed as 'nonsense' warnings by marginal actors or foreign academics about the arrival of neoliberal policies. But less than 10 years later, and through small changes in education concepts, in laws, in organisational proposals, in (head) teacher selection and demands, among others, the New Public Management school discourse is becoming the new subconscious knowledge or the new dominant discourse (Ball 2006, 50). It is what Ball calls 'the ratchet effect' (2008). This new school rationality does not need to show its

own reasons to become believable and trustworthy because it is becoming the new evidence that makes school reality knowable and understandable (Rose 1996). Moreover, this new mainstream discourse is producing and shaping more and more every single small school reality, organisation, decision and identity according to its principles – and the more it produces, the more this new rationality and its norms become normal and 'self-evident'. The New Public Management assessment is now so taken for granted in Catalan educational discourse that one of the most important agents that produce it, the Catalan public agency of policies evaluation (Ivàlua[7]), proposes 'to evaluate public policies like medicines'. Thus 'social experimentation', outputs, outcomes, efficacy, efficiency, assessment, leadership and management, all seen from a neo-positivist perspective (Denzin and Lincoln 2005), have become the Catalan government's new main discourse about public and education policies. As Ball puts in his analysis of UK reality in the 1990s (2006, 13) 'management is a promiscuous science. It has no necessary relation to substance or process'. This transformation of pupils, head teachers or public policies into 'medicines', that is into external, 'objective' and measurable things, allows them to use exactly the same designs and assessments whether they are related to children's education, road construction or public buildings' lighting efficiency.

In relation to this, one of the most interesting exercises for a researcher to (self) check the deep penetration of this grid of intelligibility, is to try to think about, for example, school assessment outside neoliberal governance criteria and marks (Ball 2013). For me, nowadays this is almost impossible. One way or another I am prone to finishing my education policy proposal with a 'good school assessment' using almost the same goals, terms, techniques and strategies that neoliberal governance uses. As Ball puts it (2003, 215), 'The novelty of this epidemic of reforms is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are'. Writing about what happens to head teachers, I am also writing to myself, my grid of intelligibility and my identity.

4. Reshaping head teacher identity through the assessment regime

I know the historical production of the current head teacher role, subjectivity, practices and responsibilities is contingent and uncertain. It is true that, despite the fact that, in the Catalan Law LEC (2009), assessment is mentioned up to 144 times, much more than any other concept or idea, things could have been different. For example, the current conservative government (2012–now) could have not developed the LEC related to school assessment in the ways it did. Or assessment could had been displayed as a collective and communitarian process of real learning and mutual help involving teachers, pupils and families, related to the improvement of school experience and pupils' equality. Or it could have been focused on the awareness of invisible mechanisms, attitudes and teacher expectations in relation to institutional classism, sexism and racism and how to transform it. Or head teachers and their practice could have been thought of as pedagogical project coordinators linked to a democratic school project (Apple and Beane 2007). But it did not happen that way. In contrast, as it was announced in the LEC (preamble)[8]:

> An internal and external assessment system guarantees the alignment of the school system to its principles and goals and, at the same time, acts as an indispensable instrument for developing the autonomy of the schools and the basis of the School Education Service of Catalonia. This establishes *the culture of evaluation* in the whole education system, which is designed to enable a better knowledge of the running and outcomes of the system.

A concrete model of school assessment becomes the key policy technology when promoting changes in school governance. I agree with Ball when he proposes, under the perspective of performativity (2003, 222), to understand this new regime both as a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation. From this perspective, I am going to analyse the in-depth interviews of four head teachers conducted in 2015 in Catalonia. I will begin by describing the research context and details, then proceed to the analysis of the interviews and end with some reflections on the reality of head teachers working in a system of neoliberal governance.

4.1. The research context

The four head teachers were selected following a number of different criteria. First, they were chosen from schools linked to my university, in which students studying to be primary school teachers do their practices. Second, two were men and two women, thus providing a gender balance. Third, they were of different ages, two around 40 years old and two around 60, and had a different amount of experience as head teachers: some relatively short (less than four years), others relatively long (more than ten). Both the second (gender) and third (age / time as head teacher) criteria were deployed in order to see the possible different relations, reactions and experiences with the new model of SIS assessment. Fourth, the head teachers were chosen from both state (3) and grant-aided schools (1). Fifth, I sought schools whose students and families were from different backgrounds. The sixth and final criteria, once I had a sample of schools that fulfilled the first five criteria, involved choosing those schools that had head teachers with whom I was better acquainted through previous contacts. The objective was to be able to ask questions of a personal nature to different head teachers from distinct schools in an atmosphere of trust in order to collect responses that were as sincere and heartfelt as possible. The fact that the four schools were all situated in semi-urban areas (between 40,000 and 70,000 inhabitants) and in the province of Barcelona was not an explicitly chosen criterion. The number of schools (4) was decided in relation to exploratory research designed to begin to analyse the introduction of neoliberal assessment in, and its impact on Catalan schools. It is evident that this exploratory research is too limited to shed full light on, or properly understand, the processes, diversity and development around this topic. As such, this article only aims to present an introductory analysis of the topic.

Contact with the head teachers was made via email and through interviews that were arranged between January and February, 2015. These were held in the offices of the four head teachers, lasted between one and a quarter and one and a half hours and were digitally recorded. The discourse analysis drew on Foucault and aspired 'to dissect, disrupt and render the familiar strange by interrogating' (Graham 2005). As Luke (1999) put it, language works not only to produce meaning but also particular kinds of objects and subjects upon whom and through which particular relations of power and knowledge are realised. This was the aim of the interviews' analysis: to identify the development and relations of different axes of power and knowledge with the production of a new identity and new practices of the head teachers of the school through the concrete functioning of a new model of assessment in education centres. The focus was on analysing the discourse underlying these transformations or 'The point of theory and of intellectual endeavour in the social sciences should be, in Foucault's words, "to sap power", to engage in struggle, to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices' (Ball 1995, 267). Or, in the words of Foucault (1972, 214) himself:

> In analysing a painting, one can reconstitute the latent discourse of the painter; one can try to recapture the murmur of his intentions [or] … set out to show a discursive practice that is embodied in techniques and effect … shot through with the positivity of a knowledge (*savoir*). It seems to me that one might also carry out an analysis of the same type on political knowledge.

4.2. Interview analysis

First of all, I would like to introduce *Head Teacher 1* and analyse some of her answers. She is in her mid-forties, in a social and ethnically mixed state primary school in a mid-sized city (between 40,000 and 70,000 inhabitants), and she is in her second year as a head teacher after becoming so as a 'last resort' after some problems with the previous one. During the interview, she shows her discomfort with the increase in demanding bureaucracy, with the new SIS (School Indicators System), and with a number of other features. But at the same time, she says that[9]:

> Precisely last Monday I presented my head teacher project for the next four years and promoting and implementing the new *assessment school culture* related to SIS among teachers is one of the main goals. Because it is the way to improve (…) We need to improve on pupils' results and teachers' professionalism.

In this case, SIS acts as a technology that regulates and reshapes the conduct of Head Teacher 1 at a distance. Even if she feels uneasy about these new measures and all their implications (more

applications to fill in, more requests for information, more time and energy focused on bureaucracy and control, and so on.), she changes her conduct and puts SIS at the heart of her head teacher project. It is into and through this new policy ensemble that include market, management, SIS and so on that Head Teacher 1 governs herself and others (Ball 2006, 49). These changes are also related to performativity as a culture: The SIS is producing a 'subtle but decisive' modification in Head Teacher 1's subjectivity, in her own perspective, feelings and identity. As she herself put it: 'I feel that the SIS is an opportunity for school improvement and improvement has to be done through these norms. We have obtained a good pupil inscription!'

As Ball (2013, 220) puts it: 'Head teachers will do whatever is necessary to excel and/or survive'. Due to the economic crisis, in the majority of cities in Catalonia, birth rates are going down, especially since 2012. Now these children are beginning infant school (3 years old) and most of these schools are having trouble covering all posts. It is really interesting how Head Teacher 1 links directly her commitment to the SIS with good school registration, even when such registrations had been done before her SIS-based project. But the SIS, as one of the multiple and different technologies of the regime of performativity that produce transformations in people, allows them to read and to feel reality through a new grid of intelligibility. Her own behaviour is, step by step, being readjusted to the SIS and the new logic that it implicitly and explicitly proposes or promises: if you adapt and adjust your perspective, your subjectivity and your acts to the SIS new rationality, the results (measurable outcomes) will be all right. Related to this, Head Teacher 1 had expressed an opinion in which a direct link exists between her personal 'good view' of these norms, her 'happy' adaptation to them and the good results in registration figures. Sometimes, I glimpse in her words that she is working on herself to adapt her own thoughts, feelings, perspectives and acts to the new dominant discourse. My point is that precisely in this respect Ball says that (2003, 225) 'becoming whatever it seems necessary to become in order to survive'. It is another example of what could happen if the rules for choosing schools (even more in a low birth rate context) and the school evaluation and governance parameters are transformed: you can conduct the conduct and educate the educator at a distance (Rose 1996). The effects of these kinds of policies are sometimes quite strong and deep. During the interview, Head Teacher 1 was, on the one hand, displeased with external evaluations and patterns proposed by regional school government but, on the other hand, when we talked about how these norms could change her manners, relations, roles, identity and so forth, she said that: 'my conduct should be to transmit to my team mates what is expected from them, be transparent in my decisions and with external demands'. The idea that Head Teacher 1 expressed during the interview with respect to the SIS was that there is no other option but to accept this new assessment model that guides the behaviour of the school and the teachers. There is no alternative. As a result, midway between obliged acceptance and her own enthusiastic decision, she explains that since becoming head teacher she has incorporated the SIS parameters to guide all the school's conduct. We could say that the SIS has become a sort of new common school sense that enables her, to quote, 'be sure of doing what is required'.

In my view, this is a reconfiguration of what being a head teacher means and involves in Catalonia. Their subjectivity has been transformed from a 'primus inter pares' with the rest of the staff to the key element and 'member' of the school governance 'team'. A member that now, from the new perspective of education governance that Ozga calls 'governing by inspection' (2012), produces a new head teacher identity to become a part of the government/inspection team, and their 'delegate' in the school. Head teacher identity has been re-produced and transformed and they increasingly belong to the 'government team' instead of the 'teacher team'. Following school governance models, head teacher identity has been reshaped as a 'professional school manager' who no longer belongs to teachers but rather to a 'government body' with the roles of inspection, government and assessment (Viñao 2004; Navareño 2012; Collet and Tort 2016). At present, Catalan school head teachers, despite having a really small margin of autonomy, are burdened with increasing responsibilities, roles and accountability. It is a new case of what Verger and Altinyelken (2014) have already confirmed: the school experience of teachers and head teachers is nowadays paradoxical, between (head) teachers' conceptions as determinant

agents for education quality but, at the same time, with politics and curriculums that dis-empower and mistrust them.

With regard to *Head Teacher 2*, she is in her late thirties, and her state primary school has more than 95% of children with a low income migrant background in a mid-sized city (between 40,000 and 70,000 inhabitants) in which the other school's average is 40%. Now she is in her fourth year as head teacher and she now feels quite confident in this position. I would like to highlight a number of different elements from her answers during the interview. First of all, she is perfectly aware that the SIS involves the production of a new head teacher subjectivity. The power relationship, for example through these new assessment technologies, produces a new head teacher identity and a form of governing them 'by numbers'. As I said before, power does not need to tell the head teachers what they have to do. They 'freely and alone' understand rapidly the rules of the new SIS game and, with different degrees of enthusiasm, resistance and doubt, play it. In order to conduct the conduct of head teachers (and teachers, pupils and families) it is no longer necessary to explain your political proposals. Through assessment as a 'neutral and apolitical' solution to education 'problems', through this government at a distance and assessment as its main technology, governments are able to educate the educators and to reshape the rules of the game. As Ball (2003, 216) puts it: 'Who controls the field of judgement is crucial'. Head Teacher 2 explains that SIS is:

> Another proposal of assessment that overall will involve more hours of bureaucracy to provide information which I have already done at least two or three times. Added to this, there aren't any interesting things or projects that could affect my school positively … But after my first totally critical thought, I tried to open my mind and look for positive issues in SIS.

A second element I would like to highlight, as Olmedo (2008, 2013), Viñao (2012) or Bonal and Verger (2014) have explained, is that in both Catalan and Spanish schools, neoliberal strategies like marketisation, school autonomy, external assessment or free school choice, have been used in a clear conservative environment which means that these kinds of strategies are always surrounded by a myriad of controls, applications and documents to fill, meetings to be held, people to whom you must explain your reports and so forth. It is interesting to analyse how the 'conservative neo-liberal' global education reforms (Sahlberg 2011) are implemented in different ways in different regions. Nevertheless, the uncertain and unstable results of this implementation are used to facilitate – precisely through the production of new realities, power relationships, professional identities and so on – the maintenance of the unequal status quo. These are issues that Head Teacher 2 talked about:

> In a school like ours, where we carry out countless projects and activities in order to try to offer support to children from disadvantaged families while at the same time working at full stretch, now we also have to follow the paper work, evaluations and so on that SIS requires.

In Ball's terms (2003), she is afraid that the SIS technologies and modes of regulation will put more pressure on her everyday activities, schedules and time and, related to these, her own conduct, preferences and values will have to be modified to adapt to the SIS goals and demands. This suspicion is shared by all four Head teachers, but experienced with different degrees of anxiety, discomfort or fear. That is, even if policies create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed (Ball 2006, 46), different backgrounds and power positions, can modulate head teachers' options.

Related to this, it could be said that both women, who are younger than the men and with less power resources and social capital, even if they have different perspectives, are 'closer' to the main discourse than men (Foucault 2013). They adapt to it and play their role as head teachers from and within this new framework. In contrast, both men, are able to take, I believe due to their own age, power resources, positions, experience and personal contacts, what could be called 'ironic distancing' against the SIS and this new wave of school reform. If power is 'productive', more than being 'resistant' to the SIS in a heroic or war sense, I believe men can express themselves in different ways. They feel they can play a different card game with their own cards.

Thirdly, as explained, the SIS assessment model introduces for the very first time, in a blurred and complex way, the performance-related pay system. Related to academic results, every single school

will have a 1–4 annual assessment result. The (head) teacher that would like to take advantage of the new procedure of teacher promotion by stages the better the stage, the better the salary and work conditions), would need to be involved in a school that must have reached level 1 or 2. If not, a complex process of individual evaluation will be held. As a new decree announces[10], the main criteria that allows a (head) teacher to be promoted to higher stages are: (a) the involvement of teachers in improving school results (measured through the 1–4 scale) and/or the voluntary evaluation of their 'teaching' performance; (b) being Head teacher and/or holding other positions of responsibility; (c) permanent training; and, of course, (d) the pupils' academic results measured by external tests, that increasingly become the key point of professional development and promotion. Talking about these new rules and criteria about professional developing Head Teacher 2 told me:

> It is crazy! The value of the teacher's involvement is only related to pupils' academic results! They cannot take for granted a direct relationship between teacher's involvement, results improvement and professional promotion. The reality isn't so simple! In a highly complex school like mine, teachers' high degree of involvement is always required, but the final marks are not what we expected. What does that mean? Can we never be promoted? In our school, teachers' involvement, efforts and critical reflections about our own pedagogical performance are really more demanding than many other schools!

Here I can add the idea that the SIS is producing a new way to value and assess teachers; a way that is transforming teachers' identity and how teacher professionalism can be understood (Bailey et al. 2013). As Tseng 2013[11] puts it:

> In the midst of wider research debates concerning professionalism, however, less attention has been paid to the processes in which professionalism is discursively constructed. This thesis attempts to explore the conflicting notions of de/re-professionalization … and examine closely the ways in which contemporary teachers have been made and remade via education policy centred on discourses of professionalism.

Tseng (2013) proposes the concept of 'performative professionalism' to understand transformations in teachers' professional identity:

> A practical-based mode of teacher formation, standards-driven policies and systems of managerial control in schools work together interdiscursively and produce new ways of being professional (…) 'New' teachers are technical experts operating within a delimited space of autonomy and expected to follow directives; concurrently, they are framed as having 'freedom' and made 'responsible' for performance outcomes. Teachers are disciplined and empowered simultaneously within this dual transformative process.

Fourthly, as I mentioned previously, the SIS 'takes' the head teacher away from staff status and places him/her as a key piece of school government and improvement. A fitting piece which belongs to directive staff but also has to deal directly and daily with teachers, families and pupils in this new schema, head teachers have the main and final responsibility of (almost) everything that (does or does not) work at school. As Ball (2003) puts it, responsibility is a key truth of neoliberal discourse. The performativity regime constantly produces new and more things to do related to government criteria, and through these, the culture of school relationships and the conduct of (head) teachers are changing. But also an aspect that often the analysis of education policies in Catalonia does not tend to take into account: their own identity. Through, for example, the SIS, a technology of governing free subjects, head teachers are re-worked as educational entrepreneurs, responsible managers and responsible for performance, and the 'ethics of competition and performance' become little by little the main one (Ball 2003, 218). As Head Teacher 2 put it: 'I am afraid because, with these new rules, nobody will join our school because it will be really difficult to get promoted. I would need to compete for good teachers but I do not like it and I do not know how to do it'.

The SIS could thus be considered, as I have mentioned, as a 'positive' technique of government that promotes a mode of thought, a conduct of (self)conduct and an identity, through criteria like market, competition, instrumental investment strategy and so on (Burchell 1996, 19). But head teacher 2 does not only feel actively involved with these criteria. When I asked her how she could try to improve the current school situation, she answered: 'The problem is that school classifications of the SIS are not exhaustive enough … that it is a major danger'. An intertwining of assessment, classification, division and rankings, transforms the grid of intelligibility, the way of thinking about education and finally

they (and me) cannot think out of it. It is interesting to consider how a head teacher that feels a significant lack of comfort and mistrust with these measures, proposes 'more and better' classification, segmentation, audit and assessment as the solution. Following Foucault's schema (1982, 2010, 2014) I could say that governance through assessment produces new truths and knowledge, new forms of (self) government and new subjectivities that line up with new management principles and proposals. And as I explained about myself, it is really difficult to think otherwise even if one feels uneasy about what he/she is doing and becoming. Or as Ball (2013, 139) puts it: 'The neoliberal subject is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled'. My main point here is that the SIS as part of an increasing assessment regime is not mainly about domination, oppression and constraint as left-wing analysis of the Catalan context (Cañadell 2013; Carbonell 2014) tends to emphasise. It is not only about 'negative' or 'less' measures: less state, less resources, less grants, less family participation in the school government body or less opportunities for poor children to follow extracurricular music or arts. It *also produces* a truth, a moral, a grid of intelligibility, a discourse (in the epistemic sense), a pattern for personal identities, feelings and (self) relationships. As I will discuss in the conclusions, that is why it seems to me so important to take into account Ball's proposal of going 'back to basics', re-politicising education from the roots and asking again basic educative and social questions (2015c). The kind of questions not only focused on 'what we do' or 'what is happening' (outside), but overall about 'what and who we are'; that is, posing questions about our own identity and the self-work that we are deploying to become the entrepreneurial head teacher, teacher, academic, parent … that the neoliberal discourse 'asks us for' constantly.

I would like to analyse one final dimension of Head Teacher 2's interview. As I said, she runs a school in which an overwhelming majority of pupils are from a low income, migrant and/or working class background. Due to these characteristics of pupils' families, the school has been developing broad dynamics, forms of organisation and procedures, that are very distinct from the traditional 'grammar of schooling' (Tyack and Tobin 1994), in order to try to accompany every single diverse pupil to school knowledge through different methods. In spite of a professional and personal effort involved in reaching that goal, academic achievements and test results are not good. Given this situation, with the enactment of the SIS, she fears that 'Apart from them taking into account the typology (e.g. a lot or little immigration) of every school, we are all considered within the same general parameters (…) they demand the same results of every single school'. If progressively more elements in school governance like school resources, teacher promotion or family school choice, are related to external test results, head teachers tend to be 'invited' by inspection, staff or even by a few white middle class families of the school … 'to take steps'. In this 'assessment régime' that is being introduced increasingly following OECD–PISA 'proposals'(Sellar and Lingard 2013), to take steps could be translated in three main ways: compete for 'better' families and try to avoid the 'less good' ones (or what Benito, Alegre, and Gonzalez (2014) call 'inverse choice'); fight to keep good teachers even when they are highly unlikely to be promoted in low performance schools; and reorganise class work focusing on what will be asked in future tests or 'teach to the test' (Ellis et al. 2015). As Ball (2006, 51) puts it, policy effects are not only related to 'first order effects', that is, to the changes in structures, practices or actions. It is also important to take into account 'second order effects', those that change patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice. In this case, some of the SIS 'second order effects' could be promoting educational realities against an inclusive, equitable and diverse education system.

In relation to this, the great paradox about assessment, which is usually presented as the major opportunity for schools' (self) improvement, critical debate and autonomy of responses (OECD 2008), could be that it often ends up aligning the school with more traditional pedagogical patterns. These kinds of realities, especially in schools like that which head teacher 2 manages, produce the basis for a schizophrenic context. As Ball (2003, 223) puts it:

> This structural and individual schizophrenia of values and purposes, and the potential for inauthenticity and meaninglessness is increasingly an everyday experience for all (…) Beliefs are no longer important – it is output that counts. Beliefs are part of an older, increasingly displaced discourse.

Or maybe it is not a schizophrenic situation. Maybe, as Hunter explains (1996, 149), beyond the explicit school principles, we can find a 'positively and irrevocably bureaucratic and disciplinary' institution. Again, the new assessment regime in which head teachers are the main contact-point of power relationships, produces dozens of invisible and small (no) decisions and (no) choices that, almost by chance, could easily lead the school to traditional pedagogical and organisational orthodoxy. This school orthodoxy, or focus on 'test achievement', is described by Ball (2013, 100) as when

> class work is designed for students in relation to their speed of acquisition and their essential cognitive characteristics and they are subject to interventions that are designed to 'fix and repair' divergence from the norms of pacing of knowledge, in this case set in relation to national 'levels' of achievement.

Head teacher 2 is between a rock and a hard place because, on the one hand, she does want to keep school innovations and real attention to children's diversity and inequality; but on the other hand, if the school does not improve their test marks, neither she, nor the teachers can be promoted, middle class parents would not want to go there, and the school could lose resources. At a distance, and even against her principles and practices, the government allows head teacher 2 to experience that maybe traditional and orthodox pedagogy and school organisation related to 'teach to test' could be a good way to not miss the train.

Head Teacher 3 is a man in his late fifties and he has been at the head of a social and ethnically mixed catholic grant-aided school for the last 12 years. This school is an infant, primary and secondary school and is located in a middle-sized city (between 40,000 and 70,000 inhabitants). I have no doubt that gender and especially age, experience and social capital are important aspects that enable me to understand how head teachers experience and react differently to the same SIS proposal. This is a reflection that also applies to *Head Teacher 4*, a man in his early sixties who had also been a member of the Education Department in the Catalan Government for four years. Now, he is completing his final period as head teacher in a social and ethnically mixed primary state school in a mid-sized city (40,000–70,000) after a former period of 10 years as head teacher.

Until now I have analysed the SIS, its central rationality and the effects and productions of this tool of knowledge – power. But the proposal of Foucault to understand power relations from the edges and resistance against them could also be useful. In this regard, Head Teachers 3 and 4 are good examples of resistance and refusal against what the SIS does and against what the SIS is trying to do with them: they reject what the SIS wants head teachers to become. Maybe the expression that captures this resistance and refusal is, in both interviews, the Catalan and Spanish expression 'Bueno'. It could be translated as a 'well' that, at the beginning of most of the interview questions that asked about the SIS measures, proposals and demands, places a distance from it.

While Head Teacher 1 critiques some aspects of the SIS, she is at the same time transforming her own identity in its terms and rationality and wants all staff to become more 'transparent and productive', Head Teacher 2 rejects more clearly what the SIS is, represents and proposes, even if she does not reject who she is becoming. That is, Head Teacher 2 complains about the SIS because it won't be useful for her school, teachers and pupils, but she adapts to its point of view, parameters, concepts and forms of measurement. On the other hand, Head Teachers 3 and 4 speak slightly 'ironically' or even act 'irresponsibly' (Ball and Olmedo 2013) with regard to the SIS proposals, principles, practices and applications. Their age, experience, network of contacts and masculinity allows them to take it all with a pinch of salt that inserts a distance, a relativisation, a suspension of the SIS as a whole truth that has to be accepted, practiced, internalised and spread (supposedly). Examples include their lack of concern regarding dates of delivery of bureaucratic information; or regarding the need to check it with extreme care 'because nobody will read all this information'. Understanding that the SIS will be analysed by people that they might know, they personalise it and at the same time they can put it in perspective and see it with distance. In Marxian terms, they can re-place a human face behind this abstract, reified and objectified technology called the SIS. As Head Teacher 3 explained:

> If on some occasion I am late in handing in the forms, since we know people in the Education Department, they ring me and ask me to send them as soon as possible. It's clear that it's impossible to analyse so much information all at once.

Head Teachers 3 and 4 also 'negotiate' with this new truth. They do not take it completely seriously because they are aware that it is just a pretence to act and know an identity to adopt or a new truth to believe. As Head Teacher 4 put it: 'the SIS is not so important in itself … because I am sure that in one or two years, they will change it like they have always done until now (…) I try to take advantage of it with respect to the school's goals, and fulfil the bureaucratic requirements but without allowing it to get to me'. I could say they use the SIS as a new software program that allows them to develop aspects they consider weak at their school instead of 'installing' the SIS as a new computer operating system that transforms the logics, the images, the processes, the relationships, the government and the identities of the school. As Head Teacher 3 explained: 'We use the SIS for our own interests and at the same time we try to accomplish it. For example, we had a weak system of internal information about school attendance and we have taken advantage of the SIS to develop it'. They also reject the new (head) teacher identity that has been articulated in government decrees of recent years and with that the new relationships with teachers, parents and pupils that the SIS wants to produce in relation to 'leadership', management and work with inspection. As Head Teacher 4 asked with a certain irony: 'After so many years as director, they won't expect me to change my whole way of doing things, right?'

4.3. Some final reflections on head teacher identity

In this section, I will offer some final reflections on the changing identity of head teachers through governance and its effects. I have tried to provide a brief and partial account of how their identities are being transformed at a distance by the new assessment regime – school governance. The four in-depth interviews undertaken to assist in this account clearly constitute a very small sample, and I would like to repeat here that, as such, it serves as just an introductory analysis – but one which, I feel, provides an instructive glimpse into the everyday reality of this new regime.

My first vision of this process is to see it as a loss: if head teachers' identities are being transformed by SIS it means they are losing, in a descriptive and moral sense, their own identity. This is a common point of view in some left-wing organisations in Catalonia (Cañadell 2013) that actually departs from a static perspective on identity. The implicit perspective is that head teachers had a (good) professional identity that now, due to the implementation of new management principles, is lost (loss). In contrast to this point of view, Foucault proposes that 'the source of human freedom is never to accept anything as definitive, untouchable, obvious or immobile' (1988, 1). That is, identity is not something abstract, immutable or an ideal already achieved, but something that is being constantly re-produced. A subject is a process of constant becoming that Foucault (2010, 2014) and Ball (2013, 125) propose to view as a *work* of self-care. If our understanding of ourselves is linked to the way in which we are governed (Dean 1999, 14 quoted by Ball 2013, 127), the problematisation of head teachers cannot be put in simple terms of freedom and constraint. My point is that the main 'problem' is how schools and head teachers are increasingly governed through governance and how they govern and produce themselves and teachers, pupils, family-school relationships and so on into and through the neoliberal discourse. But the way in which head teachers govern does not always have the same effects in every case.

In fact, I would say that adjustment to the performativity regime, the versions of the school that are produced purposefully in order to be accountable – what Ball calls 'fabrications' (Ball 2000, 5) – are quite different depending on the head teacher. Because as Ball (2000, 9) emphasises, 'truthfulness is not the point, the point is their effectiveness in the market or for inspection, as well as the "work" they do "on" and "in" the organisation – their transformational impacts'. Using these concepts of Ball (2000), and talking about the effects of governance, I can find different levels and interactions between resistance and capitulation, but recognising that all four head teachers produce their own school fabrication because these are the new rules and dominant discourse. Thus, the SIS, assessments, rankings, performance-related pay, economic cuts and so forth are techniques that have been producing, as forms of governance, new truths and new identities in education. It is into this new reality, this new grid of intelligibility, that every single act of fabrication, even resistance or capitulation assumes its full meaning. The SIS as assessment technology appears to make schools more transparent but they are

fabricating to present themselves in the best light related, for example, to the school market – school choice or professional promotion. It looks as if Catalan head teachers' main identity, despite the differences between them due to age, gender and professional experience, is becoming that of 'fabricators'.

5. Refusal and resistance to neoliberal governance

In this paper, I have tried to analyse the complex, often incoherent and uncertain connexion between Neoliberalism with a capital 'N' (Ong 2007) – as a global process related to market freedom, competition, depoliticisation, assessment or accountability, (Lazzarato 2009; Ball 2014; Verger and Normand 2015) – and neoliberalism with a small 'n'. In this paper, the latter refers to how global processes are being enacted specifically in Catalonia as a particular technology of governing 'free' head teachers and how this technology is reshaping and producing new truths, practices, relationships and professional identities. However, at the same time as N/neoliberalism is becoming the new social and educational rationality, it is very pertinent to pose the question of resistance and alternatives to it (Pignatelli 1993; Ball and Olmedo 2013; Olmedo 2013). Nevertheless, resistance cannot be just presented as an opposition to some external domination because, as explained before, the main problem for some head teachers is that they do not like what they are becoming: managers, fabricators or members of the delivery chain in response to the 'productivity challenge' (Barber 2007), because they feel external and also internal discomforts and contradictions. Even when (or precisely because) autonomy related to an increasing responsibility is one of the main elements of current governance.

As I said, the question of discomfort, resistance and alternatives emerged as a highly significant one during the interviews, but in our context it needs to be considered in a more complex way than the traditional one. In this regard, I agree with Ball (2013) and Gros (2014, 321) when they say that both resistance and refusal are crucial. Resistance here is understood as a collective awareness and questioning that allows people to think otherwise and to do things differently; and refusal as a process of self reflection and self care that allows a person to question who they are and, eventually, to be someone else. I think both resistance and refusal are closely linked. As Gros points out, related to Foucault's last lecture at the College de France (2014, 321), real care of self is also related to care of the world. However, the risk is to talk about it only in abstract words. For that reason, I believe that in both resistance to and refusal to accept N/neoliberalism, this collective and personal work and care could be viewed from a democratic perspective. As Burchell said (1996, 33) 'If democracy be thought of not as an essence but as an always modifiable practice of individual and collective self-constitution (as a practice of freedom as a way of life) then the ethic here might be described as a democratic one'. Therefore, democracy could be considered precisely as a form of power-knowledge that allows otherness, the real possibility of other forms of truths, other forms of government and other forms of lives, other forms of subjectivities and other practices of (care of) self that could allow people to build up other realities (Ball 2013, 147; Foucault 2014, 226–286).

From this democratic perspective, new and relevant questions could be asked Catalan head teachers in order to shed light on and to be aware of their own personal and institutional discomforts and contradictions. This could be the point of departure for possible processes of collective resistance and personal refusal. Questions, for example, about what the costs of SIS to them, to the teachers, to pupils and to families are; the kind of conduct and changes that SIS is producing related to school organisation and professional identity; what other educational relationships are excluded and constrained by SIS, and which others could be thought and practiced; would SIS allow head teachers to care for teachers, pupils, families and even themselves; what kinds of other knowledge, forms of (self)conduct and (self)government and forms of life – identities could allow head teachers to practise and to form other types of education, relationships or professional identities. Maybe these kinds of 'back to basics questions' (Ball 2015c) related to head teacher identity, could be suitable to release democratic and open processes of awareness and questioning personal and collective truths, forms of government and subjectivities and, through these, resistance and refusal, self-constitution and care practices in alternative and other ways.

6. Conclusion

In October 1979, at Standford University, Foucault gave a Lecture on 'political reason' called 'Omnes et singulatim'. He wrote:

> Consequently, those who resist or rebel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticize an institution. Nor is it enough to cast the blame on reason in general. What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake (…). The question is: how are such relations of power rationalized? Asking it is the only way to avoid other institutions, with the same objectives and the same effects, from taking their stead. (1990, 139)

As a result, at the same time that school head teachers ask themselves about the possibilities of resistance and refusal to SIS as a new political technology that is transforming the school and their own identities, it is relevant to ask about the rationality that produces and promotes these political technologies. Today this rationality, which is producing effects of both individualisation and totalisation, is the neoliberal one. It is a rationality that, through very distinct ways and 'pipelines', is connected to global dynamics at different levels and spheres and with different effects. (Ball and Junemann 2012). In the Catalan education system, this rationality has experienced a sudden rise in recent years and a rapid expansion as the new truth that organises educational governance from and towards a specific normality. This article presents only a small fragment of the overall picture of transformation that the whole education system is undergoing. But the research project is broader and seeks not only to analyse the effects of this neoliberal rationality at a political, institutional, relational and identity level – which in my view is very relevant – but also to identify the truth games and power relations that produce this new educational normality and this new school identity linked to neoliberal rationality. The research now centres precisely on the subjects and discourses that produce this new governance of the education system to analyse in a concrete and precise manner how neoliberal rationality 'plays' in these terrains.

Notes

1. It's what, for example, Piattoeva (2015) highlights in her article on national examinations as a technology of government. It's not a question of understanding (only) these examinations as a retreat of the state in favour of international organisms, but how numbers exercise power and how they become rooted and gain more power in the process.
2. Annual School Assessment project. Department of Catalan Education. 2015.
3. http://educacio.gencat.cat/documents/IPCNormativa/DOIGC/PEC_Avaluacio_centre.pdf
4. http://agora.xtec.cat/se-vallesoccidental3/intranet/file.php?file=Formacio_direccions/Avaluacio_centres.pdf
5. http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/arees_d_actuacio/professorat/retribucions/estadis_de_promocio/
6. 'Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul' Margaret Thatcher (1981. 'Sunday Times').
7. Catalan Institute of Public Policies Evaluation. http://www.avaluacio.cat/per-que-no-avaluem-les-politiques-publiques-com-els-farmacs-una-aposta-per-lexperimentacio-social/
8. Translated from Catalan. 'Assegurar un sistema d'avaluació intern i extern com a garantia d'ajustament del sistema a llurs principis i finalitats, i, alhora, actua com a instrument imprescindible per a desenvolupar l'autonomia dels centres i les bases del Servei d'Educació de Catalunya, tot implantant la cultura de l'avaluació en el conjunt del sistema educatiu, la qual cosa ha de permetre un millor coneixement del funcionament i dels resultats del sistema.' Italics are mine.
     http://dogc.gencat.cat/ca/pdogc_canals_interns/pdogc_resultats_fitxa/?documentId=480,169&language=ca_ES&action=fitxa.
9. Translated from Catalan by the author. Italics are mine.
10. ENS/330/2014. Departament d'Educació. Generalitat de Catalunya.
11. http://www.isa-sociology.org/abstracts-dissertations/view-abstract.php?tl=419

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributor

Jordi Collet-Sabé is an associate professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Vic – UCC (Barcelona) and honorary research senior associate at the Institute of Education (University College London), where I was a visiting fellow. I have undertaken research in the fields of education policy; democratic school governance; school, family, and community projects; changes in family socialisation (PhD); the social and political participation of young people, and education and inequalities among others.

ORCID

Jordi Collet-Sabé 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8526-9997

References

Apple, M., and J. Beane. 2007. *Democratic Schools, Second Edition: Lessons in Powerful Education*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Bailey, P., S. Ball, P. Mena Rojas, P. Del Monte, A. Olmedo Reinoso, D. Santori, C.-Y. Tseng, and H. Young. 2013. "The Constitution of Teacher Subjectivity in Brazil: Some Global Context." *Revista Educação em Questão* 46 (32): 9–36.

Ball, S. J. 1995. "Intellectuals or Technicians: The Urgent Role of Theory in Educational Studies." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 43 (3): 255–271.

Ball, S. J. 2000. "Performativities and Fabrications in the Education Economy: Towards the Performative Society?" *The Australian Educational Researcher* 27: 1–23.

Ball, S. J. 2003. "The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity." *Journal of Education Policy* 18 (2): 215–228.

Ball, S. J. 2006. *Education Policy and Social Class. The Selected Works of Stephen J. Ball*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. 2008. "The Legacy of ERA, Privatization and the Policy Ratchet." *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 36 (2): 185–199.

Ball, S. J. 2013. *Foucault, Power and Education*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. 2014. "Globalización, mercantilización y privatización." *Archivos analíticos de políticas educativas* [Globalised, Commodified and Privatised] 22 (41): 1–14.

Ball, S. J. 2015a. "Education, Governance and the Tyranny of Numbers." *Journal of Education Policy* 30 (3): 299–301.

Ball, S. J. 2015b. "Prólogo." In *Evaluaciones externas. Mecanismos para la configuración de representaciones y prácticas en educación* [Prologue. External assessment. Mechanisms for the configuration of representations and practices in education], edited by H. Monarca, 3–14. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila.

Ball, S. J. 2015c. "Back to Basics: Repoliticising Education." *FORUM* 57 (1): 7–10.

Ball, S. J., and C. Junemann. 2012. *Networks, New Governance and Education*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ball, S. J., and A. Olmedo. 2013. "Care of the Self, Resistance and Subjectivity under Neoliberal Governmentalities." *Critical Studies in Education* 54 (1): 85–96.

Barber, M. 2007. *Instruction to Deliver: Tony Blair, the Public Services and the Challenge of Delivery*. London: Methuen.

Benito, R., M. A. Alegre, and I. Gonzalez. 2014. "School Educational Project as a Criterion of School Choice: Discourses and Practices in the City of Barcelona." *Journal of Education Policy* 29 (3): 397–420.

Bolívar, A. 2014. "Autonomía de los centros y participación en el contexto actual [Schools Autonomy and Current Participation]." *Participación Educativa* 2, 81–88.

Bonal, X., and X. Rambla. 2000. "La política educativa a catalunya." In *Govern i polítiques públiques a Catalunya (1980–2000)* [The Educational Policy in Catalonia. Government and Public Policy in Catalonia 1980–2000], edited by R. Gomà and J. Subirats, 113–133. Bellaterra: UAB Press.

Bonal, X., and A. Tarabini. 2013. "The Role of PISA in Shaping Hegemonic Educational Discourses, Policies and Practices: The Case of Spain." *Research in Comparative and International Education* 8 (3): 335–341.

Bonal, X., and A. Verger. 2014. *L'agenda de la política educativa a Catalunya. Una anàlisi de les opcions de govern (2011–2013)* [The education Policy Agenda. An Analysis of the Government Options]. Barcelona: Fundació Jaume Bofill.

Burchell, G. 1996. "Liberal Government and the Techniques of the Self." In *Foucault and Political Reason*, edited by A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. S. Rose, 19–36. London: UCL Press.

Cañadell, R. 2013. *¿Qué pasa con la educación?* [What is about education?]. Barcelona: El Viejo Topo.

Carbonell, J. 2014. "Crisi i educació a catalunya: Entre el neoliberalisme i la centralització [Crisis and Education in Catalonia: Between the Neoliberalism and Centralization]." *El diari de l'educació*. Accessed February 25, 2014 http://diarieducacio.cat/crisi-i-educacio-a-catalunya-i-ii-entre-el-neoliberalisme-i-la-centralitzacio/.

Collet, J., and A. Tort. 2016. *La gobernanza escolar democrática* [The democratic school governance]. Madrid: Morata.

Dean, M. 1999. *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*. London: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., and Y. S. Lincoln. 2005. *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Ellis, V., M. Maguire, T. Trippestad, L. Liu, X. Yang, and K. Zeichner. 2015. "Teaching Other People's Children, Elsewhere, for a While: The Rhetoric of a Travelling Educational Reform." *Journal of Education Policy*: 60–80. doi:10.1080/026 80939.2015.1066871.

Feito, R. 2011. *Los retos de la participación escolar* [The challenges od school participation]. Madrid: Morata.

Fernández-Enguita, M. 1991. "Poder i participació als centres escolars una anàlisi de les lleis de 1970, 1980 i 1985 [Power and Participation in Schools. An Analysis of 1970, 1980 and 1985 Laws]." *Temps d'educació* 5, 207–224.

Fernández-Enguita, M. 2008. "Escuela pública y privada en España. La segregación rampante [State and Private School in Spain. The Rampant Segregation]." *RASE* 1 (2): 42–69.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. 1976. *Vigilar y castigar* [Discipline and Punish]. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Foucault, M. 1981. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. Harmonsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. 1982. "The Subject and Power." In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, 208–226. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. 1988. "Power, Moral Values and the Intellectual." *History of the Present* 4: 1–13.

Foucault, M. 1990. "Omnes et singulatim." In *Tecnologías del yo*, edited by M. Foucault, 95–140. Barcelona: Paidós.

Foucault, M. 2010. *The Government of the Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France 1982–1983*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. 2013. *El orden del discurso* [The Order of Discourse]. México: Tusquets.

Foucault, M. 2014. *El coraje de la verdad. El gobierno de sí y de los otros II. Lecturas del college de France 1983–1984* [The Courage of Truth. The Government of the Self and Others]. Madrid: Akal.

Graham, L. 2005. *Discourse Analysis and the Critical Use of Foucault*. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education 2005 Annual Conference, Sydney. http://eprints.qut.edu.au/2689/1/2689.pdf.

Grek, S. 2009. "Governing by Numbers: The PISA 'Effect' in Europe." *Journal of Education Policy* 24 (1): 23–37.

Gros, F. 2014. "Situación del curso." In: *El corage de la verdad. El gobierno de sí y de los otros II* [Presentation of the course. The courage of truth. The government of self and others], M. Foucault, 309–322, Madrid: Akal.

Gunter, H. M., and T. Fitzgerald. 2013. "New Public Management and the Modernisation of Education Systems 2." *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 45 (4): 303–305.

Hunter, I. 1996. "Assembling the School." In *Foucault and Political Reason*, edited by A. Barry, T. Osborne, and N. S. Rose, 143–166. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jary, D. 2002. "Aspects of the 'Audit Society': Issues Arising from the Colonization of Professional Academic Identities by a 'Portable Management Tool'." In *Managing Professional Identities* edited by M. Dent, and S. Whitehead, 38–60. London: Routledge.

Lazzarato, M. 2009. "Neoliberalism in Action: Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26: 109–133.

LEC. 2009. *Llei d'educació de Catalunya* [Catalan Education Law]. Barcelona: Parlament de Catalunya.

Luke, A. 1999. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *Issues in Educational Research*, edited by J. P. Keeves and G. Lakomski, 161–173. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Navareño, P. 2012. "La dirección de centros educativos en España. Liderazgo y gestión para la mejora escolar [The School's Management in Spain. Leadership and Management for School Improvement]." *Avances en supervisión educativa. Revista de la Asociación de Inspectores de Educación de España* 12: 1–10.

Neave, G. 1998. "The Evaluative State Reconsidered." *European Journal of Education* 33 (3): 265–284.

OECD. 2008. *Improving School Leadership*. Vol. 1 and 2. Paris: OECD.

OECD. 2014. *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century*. Paris: OECD.

Olmedo, A. 2008. "De la participación Democrática a la Elección de Centro: las Bases del Cuasimercado en la Legislación Educativa Española [From Democratic Participation to School Choice: Quasimarket Principles in the Spanish Educational Legislation]." *Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas* 16 (21): 1–35.

Olmedo, A. 2013. "Policy-makers, Market Advocates and Edu-Businesses: New and Renewed Players in the Spanish Education Policy Arena." *Journal of Education Policy* 28 (1): 55–76.

Ong, A. 2007. "Neoliberalism as a Mobile Technology." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32: 3–8.

Ozga, J. 2012. "Governing Knowledge: Data, Inspection and Education Policy in Europe." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 10 (4): 439–455.

Ozga, J. 2013. "Accountability as a Policy Technology: Accounting for Education Performance in Europe." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 79 (2): 292–309.

Ozga, J., and S. Grek. 2008. *Governing by Numbers? Shaping Education through Data. CES Briefing No 44*. Edinburgh: Centre for Educational Sociology.

Ozga, J., and B. Lingard. 2007. "Globalisation, Education Policy and Politics." In *The Routledge-falmer Reader in Education Policy and Politics*, edited by B. Lingard and J. Ozga, 65–82. London: Routledge.

Piattoeva, N. 2015. "Elastic Numbers: National Examinations Data as a Technology of Government." *Journal of Education Policy* 30 (3): 316–334.

Pignatelli, F. 1993. "What Can I Do? Foucault on Freedom and the Question of Teacher Agency." *Educational Theory* 43 (4): 411–432.

Power, M. 1997. *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pujol, J. 2009. *Memòries. Temps de construir futur 1980–1993* [Memoires. Time to Build Up the Future. 1980–1993]. Barcelona: Proa.

Rose, N. S. 1996. "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies." In *Foucault and Political Reason*, edited by A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. S. Rose, 37–62. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Rose, N., and P. Miller. 2010. "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government." *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (s1): 271–303.

Sahlberg, P. 2011. *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sellar, S., and B. Lingard. 2013. "The OECD and Global Governance in Education." *Journal of Education Policy* 28 (5): 710–725.

Sennett, R. 2006. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Serpieri, R., and E. Grimaldi. 2015. "Leader as Policy Device: The Hybridization of Head Teachers in Italy." *ECPS Journal*. Accessed November, 2015 http://www.ledonline.it/index.php/ECPS-Journal/article/viewFile/847/681.

Tirado, F. J., and M. Domènech. 2001. "Extituciones: el poder y sus anatomias [Extitutions; the Power and Their Anatomies]." *Política y sociedad* 36, 183–196.

Tseng, Ch-Y. 2013. "A Discourse Analysis of Teacher Professionalism in England since the 1980s." *ISA Abstracts of Dissertations*. http://www.isa-sociology.org/abstracts-dissertations/view-abstract.php?tl=419.

Tyack, D., and W. Tobin. 1994. "The 'Grammar' of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard to Change?" *American Educational Research Journal* 31 (3): 453–479.

Verger, A., and H. K. Altinyelken. 2014. "Governing Teachers in the Era of Global Managerial Reforms: Paradoxes and Shortcomings." In *Education and Skills Post-2015 and the Global Governance of Education*, edited by NORRAG, 44–46. Geneva: NORRAG.

Verger, A., and M. Curran. 2014. "New Public Management as a Global Education Policy: Its Adoption and Re-Contextualization in a Southern European Setting." *Critical Studies in Education* 55 (3): 253–271.

Verger, A., and R. Normand. 2015. "Nueva gestión pública y educación. Elementos teóricos y conceptuales para el estudio de un modelo de reforma educativa global [New Public Management and Education. Theoretical and Conceptual Elements for the Study of a Education Reform Model]." *Educaçao & Sociedade* 36 (131): 1–20.

Viñao, A. 2004. "La Dirección Escolar: un análisis genealógico-cultural [School Management: And Genealogical and Cultural Analysis]." *Educaçao & Sociedade* 2 (53): 367–415.

Viñao, A. 2012. "Historia de las disciplinas, profesionalización docente y formación de profesores: el caso español [History of Disciplines, Teachers' Professionalism and Teachers Training: The Spanish Case]." *Pro-Posições* 23 (3): 103–118.